

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!



Revolutionary Communist Group

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HANDS OFF RUSSIA
THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND
THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT



FIDEL CASTRO
ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE DEATH OF
CHE GUEVARA

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV'S REPORT
ON 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER

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Tories attack working class

Last month the Government published the Employment Bill 1987 and the new Social Security Bill. Norman Fowler's Employment Bill is the fourth legislative attack on trade union rights since 1980.

Under the Bill individual trade union members will be able to obtain a High Court order to prevent a union calling any industrial action without a secret ballot. Trade unions will lose the right to word their own ballot paper. Clause 3 of the Bill will mean that even if a union manages to win a majority in favour of industrial action, they will be prohibited from taking any disciplinary measures against individuals who defy the majority decision. The Bill will effectively abolish the closed shop.

Any individual trade union member will be able to take their union to court if they believe that the union has acted in an 'unlawful manner.' Under the Bill a Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members will be appointed to fund legal action taken by an individual with a Certification Officer also paying any 'expenses' that they may incur. Trade unions however, will be prohibited from giving any financial aid to union officials or workers fined for 'unlawful activities.' Trade union committee members, whether voting or non-voting, will have to be periodically re-elected through a postal ballot under the inspection of an 'independent scrutineer'.

Workers who either 'voluntarily leave' or are 'dismissed from' Government training schemes will lose their entitlement to unemployment benefits.

SOCIAL SECURITY BILL

From next April unemployment and sickness benefit will be given only to those who have worked for two full consecutive tax years. The 350,000 who will be refused benefit will be forced to apply for a means tested *Income Support* (IS) benefit (replacing the current Supplementary Benefit).

All 16 and 17 year-olds who refuse a Government training scheme or other low-paid work will be denied any benefit. One-off payments for items such as cookers and maternity wear will be abolished together with the death grant. Four million people will be 'worse off' under the IS benefit, with young people under 25 receiving a basic rate of only £19.40 per week.

The prospect of means-testing or even abolishing Child Benefit so soon after the Tories had repeatedly promised that it was 'safe' during the general election campaign, proved to be too 'sensitive' an issue for them to go ahead with just now. All Moore managed was to 'freeze' the benefit at its current poverty level.

'WORKFARE'

The *Social Fund* benefit will be 'lent' out rather than 'given' out. Claimants will be offered 'loans' with weekly repayments being deducted from their other benefits.

Families that are already heavily in debt will not qualify for the Fund because they will be unable to repay it. The right to an independent appeal will also be abolished.

LOW PAID

Family Income Supplement will be scrapped and replaced by *Family Credit*, paid through the wage packet. This 'credit' will abolish the entitlement to free school meals and milk. Workers' benefits will be based on the 'going rate' for their job, regardless of what their actual wage is. The Bill will actually increase the 'poverty trap' for those in low paid jobs (see *Tories attack lowest paid and unemployed*, FRF 72). For example, the Bill could mean that low paid workers will lose 65p in rent relief and 20p in rent relief out of every £1 wage increase. Together with income tax and a cut in Family Credit that could mean that a low paid worker would keep only 3p out of £1 a week pay rise.

ATTACKS

Despite basic welfare benefits being slashed to unprecedented levels, public expenditure continues to grow. The Social Security budget is predicted to rise to over £48bn next year, continually over-shooting Government spending targets. To compensate for this the Tories cut benefits even further. As the crisis intensifies, so will the attack on the living standards and democratic rights of the working class.

Nick Lewis



Anti-fascist Action ceremony at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, 8 November. Included in the photo are Peter Tatchell, and the father of Saranjit Singh, who was murdered by racists recently in Newham.

Tamils win appeal against racist Hurd

Racist Home Secretary Douglas Hurd suffered a resounding defeat on 12 October when his refusal to grant political asylum to six Tamils was overturned by Master of the Rolls Sir John Donaldson in the Court of Appeal. Two of the six had, in February, prevented their immediate deportation by stripping to the waist at Heathrow airport.

During the Appeal, Roger Ter Haar, counsel for the Home Office, made the outrageous claim that Hurd was in a far better position to judge the situation in Sri Lanka than the Tamils seeking refuge from persecution. This 'superior knowledge' arises from the fact that his racist minions, David Waddington and Timothy Renton (past and present ministers of deportations) had paid visits to Sri Lanka. On the basis of this information, Hurd claimed that the six were in no danger of persecution. One of the six, Navaratnam Vathanan, had witnessed the shooting of his brother by the Sri Lankan navy. Ter Haar's submission was that even if this were true 'it doesn't show the navy was persecuting him'. So, according to the Home Office, executions

and judicial murders do not give well-founded fears of persecution!

Hurd is now taking the case for appeal to the House of Lords which will hear it on 9 and 10 November. In the meantime, the cases of all other asylum seekers are being held back.

Another cause for celebration was the release of 35 Tamils from the Harwich prison ship. The Tamils were allowed off the MV Earl William not because of 'additional compassionate circumstances', as the Home Office put it, but because the ship had all but sunk during the hurricane which hit the coast. Had it not been for the storm the Home Office would still be incarcerating black people in floating death traps.

Virman Man

More injustice ahead for black people

The Government has just published its new Immigration Bill further undermining the rights of black British citizens and black people living in this country. The Bill proposes to overturn a 1982 House of Lords ruling and make oversteering a criminal offence. It also proposes to overturn an Immigration Tribunal ruling which allowed those claiming British citizenship to have their cases heard in Britain if the Home Office challenged their claim.

The Bill will further restrict the rights of an adjudicator to hear appeals against deportations on anything other than points of law and will ban the entry of second wives in cases of polygamous marriages. Most devastating of all, women and children, who are entitled to come to join their husbands and fathers, will be excluded unless proof is provided that they can be accommodated and financially supported without relying on the British state.

As the Thatcher government prepares a further round of attacks on black people's rights in Britain, the time remaining to register as a British citizen under the 1971 Nationality Act is fast running out. Commonwealth and Irish citizens settled in Britain before 1 January 1973 will lose their automatic right to British citizenship if they do not register and pay the £60 fee by the end of this year. The right to citizenship of women married to British citizens before January 1983 will similarly disappear. The immediate need is for everyone to register without delay. Those in doubt as to their status should seek guidance from their local Law Centres and Citizens' Advice Bureaux.

A recent report by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants has shown that the number of entry refusals for visitors from the Indian sub-continent and west Africa has more than doubled since the new visa system was introduced last year. The system was allegedly introduced to relieve the pressure on the immigration officers at Heathrow. In fact it was applied only to visitors from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Ghana.

Thatcher is attempting not only to disenfranchise black people living in Britain by depriving them of citizenship but also trying to have fewer black people even visit Britain.

Virman Man

Beating the Backlash

On Friday 23 October five people, including two RCG members, were acquitted of charges of disorderly conduct, assault and police obstruction. We were arrested on 3 May following the 'Smash the Backlash' demonstration in Harrogate. The march was peaceful and passed without incident; however some of the 2000 police present provoked an incident at a bus-stop.

A Territorial Support Group (TSG) began by strip-searching two young boys and, when onlookers protested, waded into the crowd and arrested five people. Dele was racially and physically abused and suffered an epileptic fit in the police van. Adam and I were both punched in the face. Tracy and Kendra were subjected to a barrage of sexist abuse.

The prosecution case lasted six days, spread over a period of two months, with ten officers giving more and more contradictory evidence. By the sixth day, the magistrate had lost all patience and declared that there was no case to answer for any of the defendants. We now plan to put the police in the dock, charged with wrongful arrest, false imprisonment, assault and malicious prosecution.

Nicki Rensten

STOP PRESS

Charges against the Kaufman 4 have been dropped. FRFI readers will remember that our comrades were arrested after Labour Party stewards called the police to remove our comrades outside a North Westminster Labour Party meeting on 31 May 1987. Kaufman was the main speaker.

Fight the Abortion Bill

Over the last month four anti-abortion bills – a parliamentary record for a single issue – have been announced, including the Liberal MP David Alton's infamous bill. All four MPs introduced their bills on 27 October – the 20th anniversary of the 1967 Pregnancy Advisory Service (London) and an abortion councillor told FRFI how these bills undermine the 1967 Act and what a serious threat to women's rights to abortion the Alton Bill represents.

'There is one main clause to Alton's bill, and that is to reduce the time limit for abortion from 28 weeks to 18 weeks.' That in itself would prevent between 5000 and 6000 women each year from having an abortion. These are women whose pregnancy is not established until after 18 weeks, for example, 'women who are menopausal and whose periods are irregular. Teenage women who perhaps want to hide their pregnancies from their parents and these don't become visible until 20 weeks.'

One of the main groups of women to be affected if Alton's bill becomes law are those carrying handicapped foetuses. Amniocentesis (a test for Down's Syndrome) can only be carried out after the 16th week of pregnancy and there is normally a 5 week delay before tests come back from the laboratory.

'Defects using scans cannot be detected under 16/17 weeks and cannot be confirmed until 20 weeks. Therefore women in this situation will no longer be able to have an abortion.'

Two of the bills put forward, Nicholas Winteron MP and Edward Leigh, Tory back benches, are a direct attack on abortion charities. These non-profit-making charities such as BPAS, PAS and Brook Ad-

visory Centres keep abortion costs to a minimum and save thousands of women a year – over 50% of those seeking abortions – from having to go through unwanted pregnancies. Winteron's bill is 'trying to divorce referral agencies from hospitals that perform abortions. Leigh's bill is another attempt to smash the charities. It is saying that women have to have after-care from a GP in their locality after an abortion. Now women coming from Spain, Ireland etc, or any woman – in this country too – who doesn't want her GP to know will not be able to approach the charities. It means Irish women will not be able to have an abortion because in Ireland it's illegal for a doctor to refer for an abortion. You are talking about a return to back street abortions.'

There is no such thing in this country as free, safe abortion on demand to women. As Gill said, 'The only way you should be looking at the Abortion Act is in terms of improving the NHS services; improving sex education; improving contraception. The delaying tactics of the NHS are incredible – an unsympathetic consultant and doctor can keep women waiting in the system until they are 18 or 19 weeks pregnant.'

The main problem', Gill continued, 'is there is a safety limit,

So Farewell then, Sir Michael Havers...

Sir Michael Havers has abandoned the Woolsack on the grounds of 'ill-health'. No one will be sorry to see him go. He was the man who led the prosecution of the Guildford Four and carried direct responsibility for the frame up. To mark his retirement we reprint below 'Show Them Justice' by Mrs Elizabeth Hill, mother of framed Guildford Four prisoner, Paul Hill.

SHOW THEM JUSTICE

By Mrs Elizabeth Hill mother of Irish POW Paul Hill

You were fifteen years, my son, when the troubles hit our land, And instead of being a schoolboy, son, you had to be a man, You fought against injustice and they vowed they'd make you pay, So they locked you up in prison for the rest of your life they say.

Things went according to their plan Til the death of Giuseppe Conlon A sick and innocent man.

They sent innocent men to prison in the year of 75, If it wasn't for this injustice Giuseppe Conlon would still be alive, The death of Giuseppe Conlon that is England's shame, So fight we must to tell the truth and clear this good man's name.

The prosecution for the crown was Sir Michael Havers bold And the truth about Sir Michael the public must be told, For finding innocent people guilty promotion came his way, Attorney General, where will your title get you when comes your judgement day?

So fight we must to tell the truth about this case, my son, So that you and others wrongly convicted with you Will see true justice done.

because scans and doctors examinations are only accurate so within a few weeks and so you have to leave yourself a month. If the limit is 18 weeks we would not be operating over 15-16 weeks. So really what this bill could do is bring the limit down to 15-16 weeks. It's a crippling bill. It's an attack on abortion and that's the end of it'

The reality is that neither Alton, all the other pro-life MPs, their spouses, mothers, sisters, will have to face unwanted pregnancies with so means of having abortions. For rich, middle class women there has

always been access to expensive, private abortions.

Gill concludes on Alton's 'crippling bill', 'What hasn't been said in this entire debate is any question of the woman's right. Alton's Bill is a direct attack on the right of women to abortion. It is part of the process of forcing women back into the home.'

Auriel Fermo (For information on 'Fight the Alton Bill' Campaign (FAB) and events planned over the coming months, phone 01-405 4801 or write to FAB, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC2B 5AU.)

Panic selling immediately hit all the world's stock markets. On the London Stock Exchange the FT-SE 100 index fell almost 250 points to 2052.3, the worst fall in a day since the measure was started. \$44bn was written off shares in one day. By Tuesday the fall had more than doubled with a further £51bn slashed off share values as 1,200 million shares changed hands. By 4 November, a massive \$146.6bn had been wiped off shares on the London Stock Market since the crash began - an amount equivalent to nearly three times the total private sector fixed investment in 1986.

Tuesday 20 October saw a record fall in Tokyo as the Nikkei 225 - share index crashed 3,836 points, a fall of nearly 17 per cent on the close of trading the previous Friday night. The same day the Hong Kong market suspended trading. When it opened a week later it suffered nearly a 30 per cent fall. Most of the other markets suffered severe losses with Singapore and Australia among the worst. As we go to press there has been some recovery on the US and Japanese markets, down 12.8 per cent and 13.5 per cent respectively (6 November) since the close on Friday 16 October. The London and Hong Kong markets, however, have continued to fall showing cumulative losses of nearly 30 per cent and 43.5 per cent respectively since 16 October. The markets are very volatile and it will not take very much to send them crashing again.

As the markets in New York and Tokyo became somewhat calmer at the end of October, the drama shifted to the foreign exchange markets. The dollar was already at its lowest level in 30 years against the yen in spite of massive intervention by the central banks of Japan, Germany, and UK to shore it up. In the next week it was to begin a rapid fall forcing European central banks on Thursday 5 November to coordinate a move on interest rates in an attempt to stabilise its level. By the end of the week it had fallen more than 3 per cent against the D-Mark and more than 2 per cent against the yen. Since the first week of the stock market crisis the dollar has fallen by about 7 per cent against the D-Mark; 6 per cent against the yen and by some 7 per cent against the pound. What the stock markets had feared has started to happen.

WHY THE MARKET CRASHED

What started the stock market collapse? It was the fear that the massive US debt, resulting from its ever growing current account and budget deficits, would now force the US economy, and, following it, the world economy, into deep recession. It was a fear that had become more and more real as it became clearer that the main imperialist nations have conflicting economic priorities and therefore do not have the political will to coordinate a change in the domestic policies to reduce significantly international payments imbalances. Of particular concern are the massive US current account deficit and the very large Japanese and German current account surpluses.

The US economy is responsible for about 35 per cent of the total gross national product of the capitalist world. It has, therefore, a crucial impact on the world capitalist economy. Since the early 1980s the rapid economic growth of the US economy, fueled by Reagan's huge military expenditure, has prevented the world economy going into deep recession. But at a price. That huge military budget, and therefore, US imperialism's global military interests, have been financed by international borrowing. The US government, having cut taxes for the rich and big business, has been forced to borrow massively to cover its budget deficit - \$221bn in 1986. The resulting rise in interest rates attracted huge inflows of investment from abroad eager to take advantage of the higher returns. The dollar appreciated in value against the other currencies. US goods became less competitive, as cheaper foreign imports took a greater and greater share of the US market. The US trade deficit rapidly grew and is expected to reach more than \$170bn this year (FAS/CIF valuation). This, together with the budget deficit, has to be financed by ever increasing international borrowing.

World economic growth, and therefore the performance of the European and Japanese economies, ultimately depends on the growing US deficits being financed by investors from the countries having current account surpluses - Germany and Japan. The US debt has rapidly built up. Before the crash the net international debt of the US was estimated to rise from a staggering \$414bn at the end of this year, to as much as \$900bn, or 18 per cent of the US GNP, by the end of 1990. This is simply not sustainable. Eventually the bubble had to burst.



On 19 October 1987 five years of rapidly rising share values on the world stock markets abruptly came to an end. On the New York market the Dow Jones industrial index crashed 508.32 points to 1738.42. \$500bn were wiped off shares. This 22.6 per cent fall was almost double the 12.8 per cent drop on the worst day of the stock market crash in 1929 which preceded the great depression of the 1930s. By the end of the week the US market had losses close to \$1,000bn - equivalent to \$4000 per US citizen

CITY CRASHES

DAVID REED



RECESSION INEVITABLE

Whatever measures are taken to reduce international imbalances a recession in the US is inevitable. On the one hand, a rapid fall in the dollar, while having little impact on the trade deficit, would devalue foreign investments, forcing a flight of foreign capital from the United States. Japanese institutional investors, pension funds etc, which have financed the major proportion of US debt over the last five years, had already dramatically reduced their investments in August when the dollar looked as though it would plummet again. The US would soon be forced to increase interest rates to halt the fall of the dollar and flight of capital, pushing the US economy into a recession. On the other hand, effective cuts in the US budget deficit would also have the same result of driving the US economy into recession.

Worldwide recession in the 1980s had so far been avoided only by building up a growing mountain of debt. Total debt in the US had topped \$7 trillion (\$7,000bn) last year equivalent to 1.7 times its GNP. A quarter of that debt was owed by the federal government and more and more of it

was unlikely to be paid back. Debt repayments were so large that they exceeded the amount spent on all major health programmes. For every \$2 going into defence \$1 is spent on debt. Any serious disruption to the US economy would threaten to bring this mountain of debt down.

In the weeks leading up to the crash it became clear that internationally co-ordinated efforts by the main imperialist nations to stabilise the dollar, achieve agreement for effective cuts in the US budget and trade deficits, and avoid the recessionary consequences through the expansion of the German and Japanese economies, had failed. US trade figures, announced in September and mid-October, showed a record deficit of \$16.5bn in July and a barely smaller deficit of \$15.7bn in August. The West Germans not only had failed to expand their very sluggish economy but had been dampening it further by raising Deutschmark interest rates. The US would have to follow suit and increase its interest rates pushing the US economy into recession. The alternative was to put the dollar into free fall. US Treasury Secretary Baker's threat to do this after a row with the West German finance minister on the weekend of 17/18 October sent the markets into panic. The bubble had burst!

In reality the capitalist world is awash with speculative money which can never be paid back. On the stock market money has been used to amass ever more money as speculators chased each other's tails in the so-called 'bull markets' of the last five years. Share prices lost any realistic relationship to the profits and dividends of the companies concerned. No wealth was being produced, just money made as speculators gambled on shares they thought would rise and those they thought would fall raking in millions in the process. Between January and mid-October this year world stock markets had risen by over a third. In Japan, as institutional investors turned away from foreign markets to massively invest in their own stock market, prices

have reached levels at which many companies would take 150 to 200 years to pay their share prices in terms of annual profits. The average price earnings ratio on the Tokyo stock market three weeks after the crash was around 45. It has a long way to fall. Price earnings ratios in London were much lower, nevertheless at 1 they were some 30 per cent above the historical average before the crash began.

Money was being borrowed at 15 per cent in London to buy shares yielding only 3 per cent. In the US they were borrowing at over 16 per cent for only a 2.6 per cent yield. Once it became clear that the rise in share prices needed to justify the sorts of risks were not likely to be forthcoming, investors started to get out. The message by 19 October as all international efforts to correct the international payments imbalances had floundered, became clear. The reality of the stock market bubble was exposed.

Undoubtedly there will be a great deal of international activity, meetings, 'summits' etc to stop the loss of confidence going further and driving the US economy, and eventually the world economy into headlong recession. Interest rates have been cut and some more substantial noises have been made by the Reagan administration towards cutting the budget deficit. Various finance ministers have spoken out about the buoyancy of their own economies. All this may prevent a further dramatic loss of confidence and delay the economic recession. But in the end the fundamental conflict of interest between the major imperialist powers make the economic recession inevitable. As *World Financial Markets* sourly commented: 'Nationalism still rules. Its danger now is a descent into protectionism, trade bilateralism... disintegration of global trade and financial markets, and impaired growth and living standards for the free world generally' (September/October 1987).

CONSEQUENCES FOR BRITAIN

The dramatic fall so far on the London stock markets is unlikely to have an immediate and direct impact on the British economy. Unlike the United States where twenty per cent of personal wealth is in the equity markets, shares here represent only five per cent of average wealth per household. The vast majority of shares, more than 60 per cent are held by institutional investors, pension funds, insurance companies and foreign investors. It would take far greater falls than those so far to have the kind of impact which would seriously undermine pension funds etc. Many shares it should be noted are still at the level of a year ago in spite of the falls.

Nevertheless, the collapse of share prices has, as one commentator put it, 'shattered one of the chief pillars of Thatcherism'. This was that 'self aggrandisement was essential for economic growth'. 'Greed had become respectable' under Thatcherism. (Victor Keegan, *The Guardian* 26 October 1987). There can be no doubt that the government's privatisation programme has taken a battering after the debacle of the £7.2bn BP share flotation. Underwriters, used to enormous fees, were made to take a £700m loss, even after the Thatcher government had intervened to bail them out by putting a floor of 70p on partly paid BP shares. It was only the Labour Party leadership who wanted to save the underwriters and some foolish investors from their losses by withdrawing the share flotation altogether. But then, as seems always to be the case, the opportunists had just caught hold of the privatisation bandwagon as everyone else was about to get off.

The British economy will rapidly feel the impact of a recession in the US. The economic stability of British capitalism has been built on the earnings from the assets of overseas investments and the monopoly profits of North Sea Oil. The stock market collapse and a US recession threaten the earnings from overseas investment at the very time when North Sea Oil production has begun to decline. Manufacturing industry output has only just achieved the levels of 1979 and manufacturing investment is still 19 per cent below the 1979 level. The British economy remains very exposed to international economic downturns. The recessionary effects will be severe.



1929: Panic reigned on Wall Street when the Stock Exchange crashed on Black Friday



Govan Mbeki addressing a press conference on 5 November

Govan Mbeki freed

On 5 November Govan Mbeki (ANC), John Nkosi (PAC) and three other political prisoners were released unconditionally from apartheid prisons. There have been many rumours and hints that long-term political prisoners would be released by the regime: these are the first involving prominent black leaders. The releases are a result of international pressure and will, the regime hopes, portray the South African Government as humane. A government statement claimed that they were released in 'the spirit of goodwill fostered by the coming festive season'. The prisoners on death-row, those facing trial for treason, and the hundreds of detainees - some of whom have been detained for more than a year without any contact with their families or friends - know this to be a cynical lie. On the morning of 6 November 21-year-old Cde Luthondo of the PAC was hanged for the murder of a Consul General in the Ciskei. The British government alone blocked a UN security Council motion calling for remission of sentence on the grounds that Luthondo's actions were criminal not political. So much for the season of good will.

In reality the prisoners have been released because an implacable campaign has been fought for their freedom. In 1985 President Botha tried to force the prisoners to sign undertakings to renounce violence in order to secure their release. Mandela, Mbeki, Sisulu, all the Rivonia trialists, with the exception

of Denis Goldberg, and Nkosi, refused to accept the conditions.

Govan Mbeki is a leading member of the ANC, jailed in 1963 for life. On release he immediately made it clear that 23 years of imprisonment has not blunted his commitment to the liberation struggle: his chief concern was for his comrades left

behind in prison. He stated that he is still a member of the ANC and South African Communist Party and supports their aims and objectives.

John Nkosi was imprisoned for life in 1963 at the age of 17, charged with conspiring to commit sabotage. He was tortured before his trial and, because of police intimidation, he appeared in court with no lawyer. Because of appalling prison conditions on Robben Island, he like many other prisoners has been treated several times for TB.

The other three prisoners released are: Walter Tshikila (PAC) was sentenced to 13 years in 1977 on terrorism charges. He had served a previous term of 5 years and had been hanged. Michael Matsobane (PAC) was imprisoned for 15 years in 1979 following the Kagiso uprising. He was tortured in detention which resulted in serious damage to his ears. Thomas Masuku (ANC) was imprisoned in 1977 under the Terrorism Act for 20 years.

Carol Brickley

Tangled web of intrigue

On Thursday 22 October all charges against Frank Larsen, Jonathan Wheatley and Evan Evans were withdrawn. The three had been charged with conspiring to kidnap members of the ANC. A fourth man, John Larsen, had had the same charge against him dropped on 1 October.

Frank Larsen (or Viggo Oerhak or John William Parker) was arrested on 9 July. He claimed to be an Assistant Chief Constable of the Ministry of Defence police. The next day John Larsen (or Hans Christian Dahl or John Parker) and Jonathan Wheatley were arrested. On 16 July Evan Evans was arrested.

Two days after the arrest of Frank Larsen, Colonel Robert Crowther, South African military attaché at the South African embassy, was expelled, or left his own accord. Seychellois exile, opponent of the Albert René government and member of the Seychelles Democratic Party, Pierre Ferriti was held for 48 hours under the Prevention of Terrorism Act then released without charge.

Frank Larsen was found in possession of thousands of documents including classified MoD and Foreign Office material, MoD security passes, warrant cards for Hong Kong, Seychelles and British police, a 700 page document, 'Operation Layout', said to be a CIA/MI6 plot to overthrow the Albert René government drawn up in 1979 and a hit-list of ANC members. These documents are now claimed to be forgeries by the government. This begs a number of questions: who forged them? Who provided the expertise to make the forgeries plausible? Why were charges of forgery not proceeded with?

The plotters were conspiring simultaneously to kidnap members of the ANC and to overthrow the

Seychellois government. The plot appears to have involved South African businessman Johann Niemoller who stayed with Ferrari for ten days last year. Niemoller, ex member of the South African 'Recco' squadron and involved in the Cabinda raid in Angola 1976, also visited the South African embassy during his stay.

The notorious mercenary-runner John Banks (Angola 1976), who set up Sinn Féin National Organiser John Higgins on arms charges in 1977 and was involved in the 1982 burglaries of ANC, PAC and AAM offices in London, met the plotters. He demanded \$5 million. It is not clear how much money was paid to Banks. No one knows what happened to it.

Frank Larsen claims to have worked for British intelligence in Africa and to have served in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). If he is Viggo Oerhak then he served time in Norway in 1976 for fraud, forgery and assault and then departed for Rhodesia.

Evan Evans, who keeps \$5 daggers on his wall, also has South African connections and prior knowledge, if not involvement in, the Cabinda raid.

The plotters held meetings at 116b Ashley Gardens, SW1, the home of Mr and Mrs McNaughton. Mrs McNaughton is a Tory councillor in Surrey. The plotters had letters, now claimed to be forgeries, from leading Tories including Julian Amery MP, Sir Edward Gardner and David Waddington MP, now Chief Whip

and formerly the Home Office Minister who led the campaign to deport Viraj Mendis. British intelligence knew something was happening from the middle of 1986 but did nothing.

Since the South African court ruling in the case of Ismail Ebrahim, kidnapped in Swaziland, that kidnapping is OK provided that no South African government or security service involvement can be proved, Pretoria has had an incentive to use deniable agents. Agents do not come any more deniable than Frank Larsen.

What this affair demanded was a thorough public investigation. Trial before a jury might have provided this. The DPP has prevented it. What has the British government got to hide? Its past and continuing collaboration with apartheid security forces is well known.

Up to 12 October, the DPP was satisfied that there was sufficient evidence to prosecute. On that day, according to *The Observer*, M15 appealed for the case to be dropped. The police wanted it continued. The DPP ruled against them. Alan Green's explanation is that the documents were examined and found to be forgeries. Yet these documents were in the possession of the police since 10 July. Were they not examined until October?

The action of ANC comrades, Solly Smith and Pene Gwala, in securing a High Court pledge that the documents will not be returned to the plotters pending a possible damages case, is to be commended. It keeps open the possibility of discovering what or who is really at the centre of this tangled web.

Terry O'Halloran

The kidnap list: Oliver Tambo, Reg September, Solly Smith, Phyllis Aluman, Aziz Pahad, Barry Gilder, Pene Gwala, Pulo Jordan, Brian Bunting, Ronnie Kasrils, Sean Steno, J Jassier, Francis Mera, Ismail J, Abdul Bham, Freedom Mkwana, M Thambu and Thabo Mbeki (*The Weekly Mail*, 23-29 October 1987)

Nicaragua Ceasefire

On 5 November the Sandinistas agreed to hold ceasefire negotiations with the Contras, requesting Cardinal Obando to act as mediator. On the same day, President Duarte of El Salvador announced a unilateral ceasefire. Duarte, having just proposed an amnesty for the death squad that raped and murdered 4 US nuns, is praised as a 'peacemaker' by Mayor Koch of New York, while the architect of the Central American peace plan, Costa Rican President Arias, is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Arias is who echoed Reagan's insistence that the Sandinistas negotiate directly with the Contras. The US is hoping to reconquer its diplomatic position by placing more and more demands upon the Sandinistas through the agency of Arias, Duarte etc. Eventually, the Sandinistas will either be driven into retreat by making concessions to the Contras, or into isolation from the Central American Presidents by appearing uncompromising. In this context Contra leader Adolfo Calero's House of Commons visit is valuable to the US because it bestows legitimacy upon this mercenary outfit.

Ultimately, the fate of Central America will not be decided on the chess board of diplomacy but upon the field of armed and mass struggle between the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces.

Trevor Rayne

Summary execution on the streets in Palestine

'They do not use the death penalty in Israel. They just kill people in the streets.' (Dr Abdel Shafi from the occupied Gaza Strip) While Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe toured the Middle East in October the 'Israeli' army was killing Palestinian people protesting against Zionist occupation of their land. Since mid-October, at least 10 Palestinians have been shot dead, over 40 wounded and hundreds imprisoned.

On 12 October Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian mother in Ramallah on the West Bank. On 14 October an 11 year old girl was shot dead in the Gaza Strip. On 28 October a Palestinian student was shot while commemorating Zionism's 1956 massacres. This is Zionism's 'iron fist' policy that Howe did not care to mention.

Howe follows in the footsteps of the infamous Lord Balfour, British Foreign Secretary in 1917. 70 years ago in November 1917 the Balfour Declaration supported 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people' and committed British imperialism 'to use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object'. In 1917 Jews in Palestine formed less than 10% of the Palestinian population. A 'Jewish homeland' could be formed only by means of ruthless oppression of the Arab Palestinian majority. Balfour was unashamed.

'In Palestine we do not propose to even go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants... Zionism... is... of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the

700,000 Arabs...

The racist Labour Party and TUC endorsed the Balfour Declaration in December 1917. Thus was the basis set for the bloody reality of the Zionist state - murder, land robbery, systematic racist oppression and genocide.

On the 70th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, an official 'Israeli' report exposed the brutal methods of Shin Bet - Zionism's internal security service. For 20 years Shin Bet has been using physical and psychological torture - to extract confessions from Palestinian prisoners in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Shin Bet also systematically lied and perjured themselves in Zionist courts. The Zionist state learnt its methods from British imperialism itself. Indeed it still uses British Palestine Mandate Laws to arrest and imprison Palestinians without trial and to deport them from their homeland.

The Palestinian masses will never accept the existence of the Zionist state. They are responding to its 'iron fist' with armed operations, mass popular street fighting with barricades, petrol bombs and blazing tyres and industrial strikes.

Eddie Abrahams

STOP PRESS

Statement on Enniskillen bombing

As we go to press the IRA have issued a statement on the Enniskillen bombing (Sunday 8 November) in which 11 people died and over 100 were injured. The statement says that the bomb, targeted at Crown forces, was accidentally detonated by a British army soldier.

It is already clear that what appears to have been a tragic accident will be used to intensify repression against Republicans, North and South. The loss of life at Enniskillen is tragic. But these British politicians, Tory and Labour, now condemning the incident with such ferocity, have remained indifferent to, or even applauded the killing of Irish people by the RUC and British army. We repeat what we have always said about such incidents: all deaths and casualties in the Irish war are the direct result of British imperialist occupation of the Six Counties. The only way to bring a just and lasting peace to Ireland is through self-determination for the Irish people.

The jailing of Gilbert McNamee

On Tuesday 27 October Gilbert McNamee was sentenced to 25 years in prison for conspiracy to cause explosions. 27 year old McNamee worked in Kimble Electronics, Dundalk. This, he said, could explain how his fingerprints got onto circuit boards and other items found in arms dumps.

The original charge of conspiracy against McNamee covered a period in which there were no bombings in Britain. Ten days before the trial began the period was extended backwards to cover the Hyde Park bombing.

The link between the circuitry found after the Hyde Park bombing and the circuit boards in the dumps was that they were of similar design. There was no forensic evidence linking McNamee to Hyde Park.

During the trial the judge ordered a further amendment of the charge to cover conspiring to cause explosions in the UK and elsewhere to incorporate the fact that Dundalk is not in the UK.

Gilbert McNamee repeatedly denounced the IRA for the death of various members of his family. This would be unprecedented courtroom behaviour for an IRA volunteer. After the trial Sinn Féin said 'He had no connection with the Republican movement. He never had. This is another example of British justice.'

Following the conviction all the British papers dubbed McNamee a 'master bombmaker' and linked him with bomb explosions unrelated to the actual conviction.

The *Daily Mail*, in an article called 'The Student of Death', reported that:

'... detectives believe he may have been responsible for up to 90 deaths, with a hand in every IRA outrage of the last decade.' (28 October 1987)

This outrageous media coverage, which was repeated time and again in TV and radio news programmes, is bound to prejudice McNamee's appeal against conviction.

Brian Rose-Smith, McNamee's solicitor, announced that McNamee would be appealing against conviction on the grounds that he did not have a fair trial (the prosecution introduced details of a previous acquittal) and that there was no evidence to link him to the Hyde Park bombing.

The McNamee case is, indeed, 'another example of British justice.'

Paul McKinlay

COURT OF APPEAL HEARING FOR BIRMINGHAM 6

The long-awaited Appeal of the Birmingham 6 opened on 2 November at the Old Bailey. Although the six are so widely recognised to be innocent that even in prison they have not been held as high-security prisoners, the Appeal was switched to the Old Bailey for security reasons. No doubt, the police hope to convince public opinion that the six are guilty. Much hinges on this Appeal: the liberty of the six wrongly convicted men who have spent thirteen appalling years in prison; the cases of the Guildford 4 and Maguires, for whom a victory in this case would be a tremendous boost.

Lord Gifford asked the three Judges to 'face up to the fact that our system of justice has perpetrated a terrible error'. Unfortunately British Appeal Courts are not renowned for their ability to face such facts. It is only public pressure that forced the Home Secretary to direct the Appeal Court to carry out this review. The Judges refused an application for a full retrial in front of a jury. The Appeal hinges on showing the original forensic evidence to have been thoroughly unreliable. Scientist Frank Seuse testified at the trial that he was

MAXINE WILLIAMS

99% certain that the men had handled explosives. Independent scientists have proved that similar results could be obtained from the men handling playing cards. Seuse was retired by the Home Office in 1985 on grounds of 'limited efficiency'.

The other major plank of the Appeal is that the signed confessions made by four of the men were produced by beatings, denial of food and sleep. A former cleaner testified that he saw blood on the cell walls. A police cadet saw them roughly

handled and called 'Irish bastards'. Former policeman Tom Clarke, said that when he saw the men 'They were physical wrecks. They'd been hit, they'd been hammered, they'd been made to stand, they'd been made to sit'. Barking dogs were used to keep them awake. The man in charge of the investigation, former Detective Superintendent George Reade was accused by the men's barrister of fabricating evidence against the six and working out a Master Perjury Plan. Reade admitted that in 1977 the courts had awarded damages for assault by the police to a man whose home Reade and other officers had raided.

The Appeal is due to last for four weeks and many independent observers are present. FRFI, which has campaigned on this case and the other frame-ups, for many years, sends greetings to the six men and their families. The London Campaign Group for the Birmingham Six has an information centre open daily at the LSE, Houghton Street, WC2. Tel: 405 7686 Ext 2876

British repression in the North...



Gerry Adams campaigning in Belfast during the recent local by-elections

Since Sinn Féin's first electoral successes, the British government has faced a dilemma: It cannot ban Sinn Féin outright and retain its 'normalisation' propaganda, but, equally it cannot sit back while Sinn Féin's votes undermine the SDLP and give the lie to the British argument that revolutionary Republicanism has little support. Hence Tom King's latest proposal to force electoral candidates to sign a declaration that they 'will neither support nor assist the activities of any organisation proscribed in Northern Ireland'.

According to press reports and to Danny Morrison on TV, Sinn Féin would not allow a 'form of words' to prevent their candidates standing. This was confirmed by the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis. Viewing it as a cynical attempt to disenfranchise Republican voters, they would sign such a declaration, obviously without subscribing to its sentiments. However, this leaves open the question of what action can be taken when candidates are challenged in the courts, which the proposal allows.

Already the propaganda has failed in its aims of placating Unionist parties. They want to see tougher action against Sinn Féin's electoral participation. Meanwhile

the SDLP's objection to the plan is not that it is undemocratic but that it hands Sinn Féin 'a propaganda issue on a plate'.

Sinn Féin's recent by-election victory winning two more seats on Belfast City Council, shows what is at stake. Sinn Féin's Fra McCann won a landslide victory in the Lower Falls, polling 5,425 first preference votes to the SDLP's 1,918. After two years of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, designed to undermine the Republican Movement and promote constitutional nationalism, Sinn Féin is now the largest party on the City Council, apart from the unionists themselves.

100th anniversary of BLOODY SUNDAY 1887

13 November marks the 100th anniversary of Bloody Sunday 1887 when the police, having banned meetings in Trafalgar Square, violently attacked a large working class demonstration leaving hundreds injured and three dead. The anniversary is particularly important because that same fight for democratic rights goes on today with the police trying to clear the picket outside South Africa House and imposing a continuing ban on Irish demonstrations in the Square. And in the case of Bloody Sunday 1887 it was an Irish demonstration which with the help of other forces, defied the police ban and was viciously suppressed.

MAXINE WILLIAMS

1887 was a bad year for the British ruling class. In Ireland years of rural unrest and agitation had led to the formation of the Land League's Plan of Campaign, under the leadership of William O'Brien MP. The Tory Government reacted furiously with the aptly-named Perpetual Coercion Bill which suppressed the Land League. At a protest meeting in Cork police fired on the crowd killing three men. In November O'Brien and others were imprisoned.

A protest meeting against repression in Ireland was called for Trafalgar Square by the Irish National League and the Metropolitan Radical Federation, a British working class organisation. But before it could take place the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Charles Warren banned all gatherings in the Square. The reason for the ban was to put an end to large gatherings of unemployed workers which had been occurring daily in Trafalgar Square.

Unemployment and misery were widespread and the unemployed began to organise, holding marches in central London, going into wealthy Church services and turning them into public meetings and breaking the windows of rich men's clubs. This greatly upset London's rich who objected to the working class parading its misery in the rich heart of London instead of quietly starving in the East End. At night destitute people slept in the Square which in the day time became home to meetings addressed by socialists. The rich were rattled - hence the ban.

The working class and radical organisations redoubled their efforts to mobilise for

the 13 November march which had now become the focus not only of opposition to repression in Ireland but also repression here in Britain. And so 13 November saw a powerful fraternal alliance of Irish people marching to defend the rights of British people and British people marching to oppose repression in Ireland.

Despite the fact that their unity gave them impressive forces - 80,000 - the police were well-prepared. Police and soldiers were out in force and Trafalgar Square was surrounded. But all over London demonstrators began to gather ready to march on the Square. As each procession came close to the approaches to Trafalgar Square it was fiercely attacked. One contingent was attacked in the Strand, 8000 others crossed Westminster Bridge where with linked arms they rushed Parliament Square using poles and iron bars to defend themselves. Others were attacked in Haymarket. Eleanor Marx, champion of Irish rights was attacked: 'I have never seen anything like the brutality of the police'. She was bludgeoned by mounted police and would have fallen under their hooves but for an old Irish man who rescued her, his own face streaming with blood.

400 had managed to get near the Square and, standing where South Africa House now is, they tried to get into the Square. They were led by the Chartist John Burns and Cunningham Graham, an MP. Both men were beaten and arrested when the crowd was attacked. Opposite St Martin's Church the Life Guards arrived and, having read the Riot Act, charged the crowd clubbing people with their rifles.

200 demonstrators were taken to hospital, 3 died as a result of injuries, 300 arrests

NOTICE! MEETINGS TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

In recognition of the disorderly means which have recently occurred in Trafalgar Square and of the danger to the peace of the Metropolitan Police, the following notice is hereby given.

And with a view to prevent such disorderly proceedings and to preserve the peace of the Square, the following notice is hereby given.

CHARLES WARREN

Meetings banned - 8 November 1887

were made and 160 were imprisoned for between 2 weeks and five years. Five days later the Law and Liberty League was founded. Uniting diverse forces from Radicals to socialists, its aim was to protect free speech, the right of assembly in Trafalgar Square, oppose police violence and pay court fines. Such a body would be as welcome today as it was then.

The following Sunday saw many going back to the Square and they were again savaged. One man, Alfred Linnell died from his injuries. His funeral, attended by 100,000 was organised by the Law and Liberty League. From the hearse hung the red flag of the socialists, the green-yellow flag of the Radicals and the Green flag of the Irish - the forces who had united to fight for the Square. These forces - the working class, democrats and oppressed peoples - still represent the alliance which could most powerfully fight for democratic rights today. Equally, Bloody Sunday showed that by giving support to the Irish struggle the British working class takes up the struggle to defend itself. It is a lesson that today's movement has, unfortunately to re-learn.

...and in the South

Implement the Extradition Treaty... or else is Tom King's threat to the Haughey Government. The Extradition Act which will throw even more Republicans into British courts and prisons, is the Twenty Six County government's only bargaining card at present. And in response to even their pitiful requests for minor reforms, King has bluntly told them they have overplayed their hand.

The Act is due to be ratified in Dublin on 1 December against considerable domestic opposition. In return, Haughey and co. have yet to show a single meaningful (or even cosmetic) reform of the Six County judicial apparatus. Public opinion in the South is asking whether Irish citizens should be extradited to face Diplock courts or courts in Britain. The cases of the Birmingham 6 and Guildford 4 loom large when the track record of courts in Britain is considered.

Haughey's government has humbly asked simply for three judge rather than one judge juryless courts in the North. Even this is too much for the British government who have instead offered to 'limit' the range of cases tried by Diplock courts. King has made it clear who is boss: failure to implement the Act will have 'very serious consequences for Anglo-Irish relations'.

Such talk makes the Dublin government nervous. They do not want a serious breach with their British imperialist masters. But equally they do not want to be seen to be so craven that public opinion turns against them. Their budget cuts have already made them unpopular enough. Their dilemma will be sharpened if the Birmingham 6 appeal fails. This would cause widespread anger in Ireland and potentially restrict the scope of the Twenty Six County government's pro-British actions.

Christine Russell

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

'No nation that oppresses
another can ever itself be free'
A SERIES OF FORUMS WHICH
WILL ANALYSE AND DISCUSS
BRITAIN'S RELATION TO
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Wednesday evenings 7pm prompt
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18 NOVEMBER

Irish Prisoners in British jails.
The H-Block and Armagh hunger
strikes. Political prisoners in
England.

25 NOVEMBER

Ireland: the key to the British
revolution • The British labour
movement has betrayed the Irish liberation
struggle and therefore cannot
defend the British working class
• Britain cannot play a
progressive role in Ireland
Speaker: David Reed
Entrance fee to each evening 50p

Scotland: the struggle for prisoners' rights



In the courts, in the prisons, and outside the prisons the struggle for Scottish prisoners rights goes on. FRFI has always supported this struggle and given extensive coverage to Scottish prisoners' protests. GRAHAM JOHNSON has investigated the Barlinnie trial, visited prisoners relatives, spoken to ex-prisoners and contacted prisoners. He has compiled this page. He spoke, on behalf of the RCG, at the Glasgow RCG public meeting in support of the prisoners on Thursday 5 November. We are dedicating this page to all those courageous Scottish prisoners who are taking up the struggle, on behalf of all working class and oppressed people, for fundamental democratic rights in the prisons.

John Gallagher

On 26 September John Gallagher was moved from Shotts prison to the barbaric Inverness 'cages'. The authorities have given no reason for this move. John's brother, George, told FRFI about the attack on John Gallagher.

Last summer John was moved to the Scottish prison system's 'showpiece', Shotts. He was happy to be moved to the more liberal regime at Shotts. However, he was being used by the Scottish office as part of their attempt to whitewash the Scottish prisons. His move to Shotts was just for show.

On 24 September Shotts' prisoners were refusing to work in the laundry because of the conditions there. John was asked to sort out the dispute. He tried to approach the head of Scottish prisons, Alistair Thomson.

Two days later John was suddenly moved from Shotts to the Inverness 'cages', 'in the interests of Shotts prison'. Alistair Thomson has since claimed that John Gallagher is the sole reason for the recent unrest in Scottish prisons.

It is true that the brutal assault on John Gallagher was one of the incidents that sparked off the Shotts prison protest involving more than 100 prisoners (see FRFI 72).

On the way to Inverness John was assaulted by eight prison officers. He was made to lie face down in the van with his

legs tied together. He was badly beaten up, dragged out of the van, stripped and left to lie in Inverness.

When his brother George visited him ten days later he still had bruised ribs and back, and swollen wrists. He was also depressed and run down. John went on hunger strike for four days in early October. His lawyer persuaded him, for the sake of his health, to end the hunger strike.

The 'cages' are brutal control units. They are cells within cells, with no sunlight and many 'special effects' to disorientate prisoners. They provide a regime of psychological torture. John Gallagher is under attack for fighting back.

Every item of John's personal belongings has simply disappeared. His mail is censored and many letters have been stopped. He is not allowed to write anything about conditions in the 'cages'.

As George says 'John is an embarrassment to the Home Office'. George and other relatives and friends of John Gallagher are organising a campaign to defend John. FRFI is supporting that campaign and urges all readers who can to do likewise.

'Strangled frustration'

a letter from John Gallagher



Many thanks for your correspondence in which you express concern for my plight within the Scottish prison system and, in particular, my current abode herein at the Inverness 'cages'. It is with strangled frustration that I forward my reply to you and your organisation, for I am not permitted by either management hereat or departmental bodies to discuss with anyone circumstances appertaining to my situation. To do so would result in the suppression of my outgoing correspondence.

It has become abundantly apparent to me over the past nine and a half years of incarceration that prisoners throughout the Scottish penal system do not have any human rights. This has been strongly confirmed by recent events both here at Inverness and the manner in which my removal from Shotts was conducted. Let me state before leaving you that I am totally devoid of a reason for being here in the first place.

As for a detailed account of my experiences in prison, past and present, I would not be exaggerating by saying that my experiences - hard practical experiences - would engage the entire services of your publication for a period lasting no less than 11 months.

I sincerely appreciate your offer of help and look forward to hearing from you again soon. Convey my regards and best wishes to everyone at FRFI.

With courage and strength
John Gallagher

It is knowing that you're not alone that gives you the courage to be alone.

* We strongly urge all readers, especially other prisoners, to show their solidarity with John Gallagher. Write to him and thereby let the Scottish prison authorities also know that he is not alone. John Gallagher, 562/87, segregation unit, HM Prison, Inverness, Scotland.

CAMPAINING FOR PRISONERS RIGHTS

Mick McCallum, ex-prisoner, and campaigner for prisoners' rights, spoke to FRFI about the crisis in Scottish prisons.

Mick said: 'I'm sure Thatcher herself took the decision to use the SAS [to end the Peterhead protest, see FRFI 72]. This brings us into a new era with the use of

paramilitary forces to break up prisoners' protests. Inevitably the establishment responses will get even more repressive.'

Mick McCallum and his comrades in the Dumfries Scottish Prisoners Support Committee have responded to the crisis by issuing a programme of demands aimed at exposing the reality of Scottish prisons and protecting prisoners' rights.

FRFI strongly endorses the demand for a 'full scale and public investigation' into the Scottish prisons. We invite prisoners' comments on the list of demands.

1. An end to the secrecy surrounding the prison system.
2. A full scale and public investigation into the administration of the Penal system, to eliminate all abuses of authority which are rife.
3. The immediate setting up of an impartial and independent body to investigate serious complaints by prisoners.
4. An end to the jailing of the mass of petty offenders.
5. An end to the censorship of prisoners' correspondence.
6. An end to the jailing of pregnant women and girls.
7. An end to the use of the control units particularly the Cages.
8. Increased and improved facilities and open visits for all.
9. The abolition of the Visiting Committee and Board of Visitors.
10. Unrestricted access to legal advisors, the police and the courts.
11. The abolition of parole, and the intro-

- duction of half remission.
12. Mass programmes of education for prisoners and prison officers, ultimately education is the solution to all the problems besetting the prison system.
13. More involvement between prisoners and the local community.
14. A proper wage for work done in prison, money to be deducted for keep, criminal injuries board, and support of prisoners dependants.
15. Conjugal visits for long term prisoners.
16. No restriction on the number of photographs that prisoners are allowed to have.
17. Permission to receive parcels.
18. Yoga and meditation classes to help long term prisoners come to terms with their sentences.
19. Prisoners in all prisons should be allowed to get musical instruments in.
10. The prison medical service to be administered directly by the NHS.

Barlinnie trial

Nine prisoners are currently on trial for their alleged part in the Barlinnie prison protest of January this year (see FRFI 66). They face 39 charges including attempted murder of 112 prison officers. The trial has been surrounded by massive security and reactionary media hype about 'men of violence'. Any chance of a fair trial was lost on the day the trial started.

The Scottish press is reporting allegations - 'A knife-wielding inmate attacked a Barlinnie prison officer' - as if they were fact. Even the judge was forced to remind the jurors to disregard anything they read in the press or saw on the television about the trial.

When one prison officer 'identified' a prisoner on trial as the person who attacked an officer, the prisoner shouted 'You are a liar... He's getting me 20 years because of his lies.'

But the best efforts of the prison officers could not cover up the allegation made by one prisoner that he and another prisoner were violently assaulted by prison officers just before the protest began.

The trial is expected to be a long one. It is already clear that the prisoners can expect precious little justice from the courts. The authorities want their revenge. It is not trials that are needed but an independent public inquiry into the Scottish prison system.

Two more dead

Two remand prisoners died within days of each other at the end of October.

On Friday 30 October Gerald Stafford hanged himself after five and a half months on remand in Barlinnie prison.

On Saturday 31 October Thomas Kerr,

17, hanged himself in Dumfries prison.

The 'suicide' rate in Scottish prisons, especially Young Offender Institutions, is extremely high. While prisoners are dragged through the courts for defending their rights, the slaughter of young prisoners goes unchecked.

PRISONERS FUND

Each month it costs £66 to send our newspaper into prisoners. A subscription for a prisoner costs £7.50 and prisoners cannot afford to pay this. We are appealing to our readers to take out a subscription to our Prisoners Fund

- I enclose a donation of £ _____ to help pay for a prisoners subscription to FRFI. (Cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications)
- Please send me a standing order form

Name _____ Address _____

Return to: FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

On 11 December 1979 three men, Tim Jenkin, Stephen Lee and Alex Moumbaris escaped from Pretoria Maximum Security Prison. They were all political prisoners jailed for their activities against apartheid. *Escape from Pretoria* is an exciting and detailed account of an ingenious jail break. That said, the book also contains a thinly veiled attack on amongst others, David Kitson, one of Jenkin's fellow prisoners, and as such requires comment.

The book opens with Tim Jenkin's account of his political awakening whilst a student abroad, his recruitment into the ANC and his return to South Africa in 1975 with his friend Stephen Lee to carry out work for the liberation movement. Outwardly both of them carried on the lives of respectable academics, secretly they were responsible for numerous 'leaflet bombs' in Johannesburg and Cape Town over the next three years.

This account of their activities does not try to hide the mistakes they made - most important of all their lax security which led to their arrest in 1978. Jenkin's description of the trial reads like a guide on how not to conduct a political trial. They were both described by their own barristers as misguided, Jenkin's character witness said he had a 'personality defect' and Lee's barrister pleaded leniency on the grounds that he was 'carily led'. Regardless (as always) they were both found guilty - Jenkin was sentenced to 12 years, Lee to 8 years.

The second half of the book, dealing with their transfer to Pretoria Maximum Security Prison to join the other white political prisoners and their escape, is less candid. Jenkin faces a problem - the first question that any informed reader will ask is 'how were the escapees chosen?' Why was it decided that these three prisoners would escape instead of, or without, leading figures in the liberation movement namely Denis Goldberg who was serving a life (meaning until death) sentence and David Kitson serving 20 years? The ANC prisoners operated under discipline, so how was the decision made?

Jenkin constructs an explanation without ever posing the question, and perhaps ultimately it is close to the truth - the escapees were 'chosen' by a process of self-selection through their single-minded determination. In order to justify his position Jenkin, therefore, has to explain why his comrades were 'less determined'.

From the start Jenkin is anxious to make it clear that he and Lee were committed to escape - all political prisoners, he argues, have a duty to escape. To that end Lee and Jenkin struggled in a large amount of money supplied by their families.

From the start their fellow prisoners are judged primarily by their interest in the escape plans

Escape from Pretoria maximum security



Pretoria maximum security prison

Escape from Pretoria, Tim Jenkin, Kliptown Books 1987, 240pp £5.00 pbk.

Jenkin claims that within days of arrival at the prison, they (Jenkin and Lee) were 'amazed and disappointed' that no viable escape plan existed 'as we had expected them to have some pretty thoroughly worked out plans, or at least some good ideas, as some of them had been in captivity for a long time'.

Among their fellow prisoners were Denis Goldberg, sentenced at the Rivonia trial along with Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki, and David Kitson sentenced for sabotage, being a communist and a member of the High Command of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Both Goldberg and Kitson had indeed been in captivity for a long time: they had already served 14 years in prison and had attempted escapes while in detention. Denis Goldberg in fact managed to escape, was recaptured and was kept for a month in chains as a result. David Kitson had arranged an escape during detention at Randfontein police station which was foiled by his removal to a prison. Other escapes were planned over the years which failed either through technical faults or betrayal. Meanwhile the Maximum Security prison had been

built. Neither Kitson nor Goldberg can have regarded the intervening years of fighting successfully for better conditions as a waste or failure.

Nevertheless both David Kitson and Denis Goldberg were keen to escape in 1978 when Jenkin arrived in prison and in fact took considerable risks to help. Alex Moumbaris, the third eventual escapee, was immediately keen to be included. Others joined the group later, including David Rabkin, and by the beginning of 1979 it was planned that a large group would escape. An escape committee called the Washing Committee (WC) was formed consisting of David Kitson (convenor) and Moumbaris.

Without Jenkin's technical genius the escape would have been impossible. Over a period of months using the prison workshop Jenkin made wooden keys for the cell doors and for the gates which led to the outside door of the prison, opening onto the street. Jenkin is at his best describing in detail the methods he used, and the testing of the keys. Meanwhile the prisoners assembled civilian clothing for the escape.

With such a large number of



Denis Goldberg

prisoners escaping it was agreed that outside help would be needed at the entrance to prison. Coded messages were sent out asking for help. Two planned dates for escape, in February and April 1979, had to be cancelled because the outside help was taking longer to organise. By now Jenkin, Lee and Moumbaris were openly impatient and wanted to proceed without outside help. Jenkin and Lee had been in prison for less than a year.

It would have been extraordinary if the tension of the situation had not led to disagreements. By October 1979 only five intending escapees were left - Jenkin, Lee, Moumbaris (these three are referred to throughout as 'us'), Kitson and Goldberg. Both Kitson and Goldberg had doubts about the plans - Goldberg wanted to wait for outside help and Kitson wanted the keys to the final doors to be tested. Jenkin, at this point, offers his central explanation:

The whole exercise had taught us much about human nature. It was wrong to expect from our comrades the same enthusiasm to get out that we had displayed. Stephen and I had arrived determined to escape, we had come prepared to escape, we believed all along that we could escape, we did not have to have faith in anyone but ourselves and we had



David Kitson

very long sentences ahead of us. Alex took to the escape idea because he'd always had escaping on his mind and had considered 'settling in' as a sign of capitulation to his captors.

The situation for the others was quite different. When they found themselves in prison they probably looked at the security and thought no further about escaping... they had reconciled themselves to their fate and had done everything to make their stay as comfortable and as meaningful as possible. (my emphasis)

Jenkin's sentence paled into insignificance next to Goldberg's, but even so Goldberg's doubts were brushed aside. Without outside help it would be impossible for large numbers to escape and what is more, there would be only one chance. Inevitably following an escape, successful or not, prison security would be tightened even further. Leaving Goldberg out of the escape plans would mean leaving him in jail probably for life. Nevertheless they pressed ahead.

With Goldberg now dropped out, this left only 'us' and David Kitson - now referred to as the 'Dave barrier' because he wanted a final test of the plan. This 'problem' was quickly solved by a meeting of 'us' which decided to ask David Kitson

to withdraw. The 'safest' escape plan, by the way, involved hiding for a short period in a cupboard which would hold only three people. Dispensing with the 'Dave barrier' solved the problem. Throughout the whole period Kitson had stressed the political necessity of success. Now once does Jenkin face the fact that patience could have resulted in a greater political victory.

It is a tribute to both Denis Goldberg and David Kitson, as well as the other prisoners, that they helped the three to finally escape on 11 December 1979, knowing that they would be left to face the music. Jenkin and Moumbaris trekked to Swaziland and then Mozambique where Lee later joined them.

In a brief final chapter Jenkin deals with the consequences: 'for our comrades who stayed behind it meant three years of unhappy confinement in the "condemned" section of Pretoria Central where prisoners awaiting execution are held'. For those not familiar with Jenkin's code 'stayed behind' means 'chose not to escape' - very far indeed from the truth. 'Unhappy confinement' is Jenkin's way of hiding the appalling conditions which faced the prisoners after their escape. What Jenkin could not have foretold, and would certainly not dream of acknowledging, was that the response to these terrible conditions would be the calling of the 86-day picket to get the prisoners moved, and the birth of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group. Interested readers should look at *Where Struggle Lives* by Norma Kitson for a real account of the 'consequences'.

The apartheid regime rebuilt the Security Prison, spending half a million rand on additional security even so, advises Jenkin in a final homily on the subject, the prisoners should be planning escapes. Jenkin does not say what happened to his fellow prisoners: David Rubkin was released in 1983 and died in 1985; Angola; David Kitson was released in May 1984 and was reunited with his family in London. He was suspended from the ANC in 1984 for refusing to publicly condemn City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, hence the barbed comments which litter Jenkin's text. Denis Goldberg was released in 1985 after agreeing to renounce violence.

Jenkin is no doubt correct that escaping from a prison requires great determination and application. Whether this objective transcends all political considerations is another matter. By escaping as they did Jenkin, Lee and Moumbaris certainly struck a blow against the apartheid regime. How much greater that blow would have been if Pretoria Maximum had been emptied of its prisoners overnight, and the escapees had included Denis Goldberg and David Kitson, we will never know.

Cornel Brackley

'The People's Flag'. Channel 4. Director Chris Reeves. Platform Films.

'The People's Flag' covers 65 years of the British labour movement, 1914-1979. The opening shots of the first programme cut from British working class crowds welcoming home the Falklands task force to colonial police brutally assaulting Indian demonstrators and back to Michael Foot's infamous demand that Thatcher 'prove by deeds' her commitment to the Falkland Islanders.

The whole series exposes the bloody history of the British Labour Party and TUC in supporting British imperialism. But it goes further than this. It shows how the British working class has, despite periods of industrial militancy, so far failed to 'free itself from jingoism'.

'The People's Flag' continually relates the history of the British working class to the history of British imperialism. It firmly locates the birth and growth of the modern labour aristocracy in the privileges given to the upper layers of the Brit-

The People's Flag



Frederick Engels

ish working class, privileges based on the superprofits extracted from oppressed peoples all over the world. It therefore reveals the source of the political weakness of the British working class despite its indus-

trial strength. This is the great strength of 'The People's Flag'.

It is precisely this strength which is attacked by those on the British left who refuse to face up to the reality of British imperialism. In *Socialist Worker* (24 October 1987) Phil Taylor sets out to disprove the central argument of the series.

'Firstly,' he says, 'conservative tendencies among British workers predate the high tide of imperialism of the 1890s onwards'. This high tide is an invention of Taylor's to hide the truth.

1850-75 saw the rapid expansion of British capitalism based on Britain's vast colonial possessions and a monopolist position in the world market' (Lenin). The reason 'conservative tendencies' - more precisely the birth of the British labour aristocracy - predate the 1890s is that British imperialism predates the 1890s.

'Secondly,' says Taylor, 'unburdened by any knowledge of history, it is mistaken to suggest that the Em-

pire fed an economic "upswing" which led to industrial peace and benefits for workers.' The ranks of the 'misaken' include Marx, Engels, Lenin, all serious Marxist and even non-Marxist historians. 'The People's Flag' itself shows how consumption of tea doubled and sugar trebled in the years 1860-1910.

In 1858, Engels declared: "... the English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois

For a nation which exploits the whole world this is of course to a certain extent justifiable.' In this period, 1850-75, real wages rose and the New Model unions, based on the labour aristocracy, were formed. As Lenin said: 'Marx and Engels traced this connection between opportunism and the imperialist features of capitalism systematically, during the course of several decades.' Nobody can make head or tail of the real history of the British working class without tracing this connection systematically.

Phil Taylor prefers, however, to recite endlessly various examples of industrial militancy without any regard to their historical context and, falsely, to lend a political character to economic struggles. The fact that British and Irish workers jointly struggled to form the New Unions of the unskilled in the 1880s is said to be evidence of workers breaking with 'the racism of Britain's imperialist past.' You may as well proclaim that the participation of Protestant workers in the Six Counties in a strike is evidence of a break with loyalism (though you would be well advised not to proclaim this in the Shankill Road). It is simple-minded nonsense.

In *Anti-Dühring*, Engels attacks the 'a priori' method of investigation which deduces reality from the investigator's conception of reality. 'The object is then to conform to the concept, not the concept to the object'. This method produces 'an image which is distorted because it has been torn from its real basis.' Just so Taylor's 'image' of the British working class is a distortion because it is torn from its real basis in British imperialism.

The period 1918 to 1920 was a

period of great industrial militancy. Yet *The Daily Herald*, then a progressive newspaper playing an important role in the Hands Off Russia movement, in 1920 could attack the use of Senegalese troops in the Ruhr as 'an abominable outrage upon womanhood, upon the white race and upon civilisation...'. These 'primitive barbarians... stuffed their haversacks with eyeballs, ears and heads of the foes...'. The black troops are accused, without any evidence being produced, of raping white women, because 'The African race is the most developed sexually of any... Sexually they are unrestrained and unrestrainable. That is perfectly well known.' (10 April 1920, emphasis in original). Who can doubt the consequences of imperialism for the political level of the British working class?

'The People's Flag' is worth watching and discussing because it raises the issues of imperialism and racism. It has weaknesses but these are secondary. People should write to Channel 4 and congratulate them for showing the series. It is to be hoped that it will quickly be available on video.

Terry O'Halloran

Hands off Russia!

In March 1917 a British Labour delegation was allowed to travel to Russia in an effort to shore up the determination of the Provisional government to stay in the war.

One of the party was Will Thorne, formerly militant Gas Workers leader taught to read and write by Eleanor Marx, proudly wearing an expensive fur coat given to him for the journey by Attorney-General FE Smith who was leading court actions against left-wing militants at the time. As *The Socialist* (newspaper of the Socialist Labour Party) commented Thorne and FE Smith had more than a fur coat in common. The February Revolution was hailed both by the leadership of the British labour movement and the Coalition government. The Parliamentary motion to send a telegram of greetings was moved by Bonar Law, Conservative Leader of the House. The massive Leeds Convention, 3 June 1917, revealed the enthusiasm of the labour leaders and the left.

The Leeds Convention was organised by the British Socialist Party and the Independent Labour Party. Between 1,150 and 1,300 delegates, including 580 delegates of trade union and Labour Party organisations, attended. Both Ramsay MacDonald MP and Philip Snowden MP took part. A motion to set up Councils of Workmen and Soldiers' Delegates in every area was carried without opposition. The bourgeois press condemned the resolution as 'a violation of the law'.

However, the Convention was not quite as revolutionary as it seemed. The motion was proposed by WC Anderson MP. He said 'I wish to say emphatically that this resolution was not intended to be subversive, not unconstitutional...'. The Convention also voted to support the war aims of the Provisional government. Ramsay MacDonald had told his constituents a month before the Convention, that the Bolsheviks were a party 'of thoughtless anarchists... whose minds were filled with violence and hatred'.

When King George V expressed fears about the Convention, up popped our friend in the fur coat, Will Thorne, to mop the Royal brow: 'I've seen these things happen many times before in days gone by, and in my humble judgment there will never be a physical violent revolution in this country...'. This seemed to relieve his mind, and he spoke to me in a most homely and pleasant way. I was very pleased. (Will Thorne's account of his conversation with the King, cited in Raymond Challinor, *The origins of British Bolshevism*, p 182)

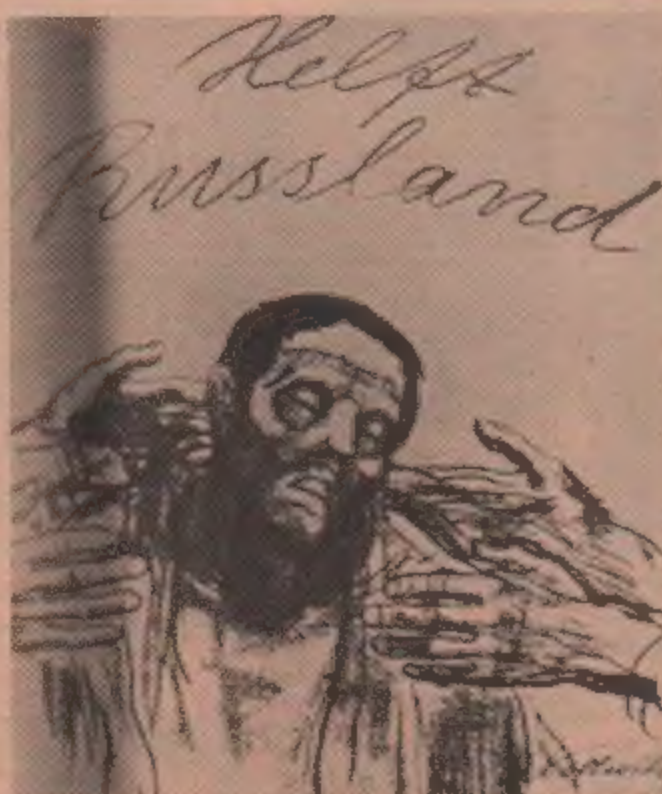
No Councils were set up. Meetings organised to implement the Leeds resolution were violently broken up by soldiers and right-wing mobs. Sylvia Pankhurst, John MacLean and others struggled to give some life to the Leeds motion but failed.

Some of the people who had taken part in the Leeds Convention were later to denounce the October Revolution and the Bolsheviks. We already know the real attitude of Ramsay MacDonald, who was to become the first Labour Prime Minister in 1924. Philip Snowden, who, in 1913, had been a vicious opponent of Larkin and Connolly, thought that the October Revolution was 'tragic indeed'.

In *The Herald*, later *The Daily Herald*, the Bolsheviks were denounced by HN Bradford as 'fanatics who have carried the Socialist view of the class war to its logical but exaggerated conclusion'. In June 1918 the Labour Party Conference had a special guest speaker: Kerensky. The attitude of official labour to the Bolsheviks was aptly summarised in British agent Bruce Lockhart's description of Labour MP Arthur Henderson's reaction to the Soviets: 'He did not understand their language. He did not like their manners.'

There was, however, another view. The small forces of the revolutionary left hailed the October Revolution and the Bolsheviks. *The Call* (British Socialist Party), *The Socialist* and the Workers' Dreadnought (Workers' Socialist Federation) supported the Bolsheviks. *The Socialist's* headline on the fall of the Provisional government was 'Hail Revolutionary Socialist Russia'. The 17 January 1918 issue of *The Call* was confiscated under new censorship regulations for carrying a manifesto on Russia, entitled 'Russia's appeal: Will British Workers remain Silent?'

All three papers carried material from Russia including reports and translated articles and appeals. They were subject to



Left: Käthe Kolwitz poster in defence of Soviet Russia. Right: cover of first issue of Communist International

THE FIGHT TO DEFEND SOVIET RUSSIA

Even before the First World War ended capitalist troops were landing in Russia in an effort to strangle the Soviet Republic at birth. In early 1918, following the ratification of the Brest-Litovsk treaty between Russia and Germany in mid-March, British troops landed at Vladivostok. Japanese troops were already operating in Siberia. British forces were then landed at Murmansk in June. Soon there was to be fourteen capitalist nations directly involved in the war against Soviet Russia and assisting White Russian reactionary forces. How did British labour respond?

In August 1918 Sylvia Pankhurst and others issued an appeal 'Save the Revolution'. The opportunist leaders of British labour had no intention of doing so. At the Inter-Allied Conference of Labour and Socialist parties in September 1918 while the 'deepest sympathy' was expressed to Russian labour there was no direct reference to intervention. Prime mover in this was Arthur Henderson, Labour MP, member of the Coalition government and the man who, in 1916, had led the applause at the murder of James Connolly by a British firing squad. Henderson had been instructed by the Labour Party executive not to 'approve or condemn Allied intervention' but to accept it 'as an accomplished fact'.

The Call appealed to British workers to act in the face of their leaders' treachery: 'Do not let it be said that it was the apathy if not the hostility of the workers of Britain that delayed the complete triumph of the workers of the world'. This appeal was issued just two weeks after *The Call* had again been raided and copies of Lenin's *Lessons of the Russian Revolution* seized. A printer had also had his shop closed down for printing an issue of *The Socialist* containing the constitution of Soviet Russia and Sylvia Pankhurst had been summoned for a 'seditious' speech in

which she called for Soviets in Britain. While the leaders delayed and betrayed, the left were facing state repression in defence of their Russian comrades.

Following the Armistice of November 1918 and faced with a General Election in December, the Labour Party rediscovered some of its left credentials. In its manifesto it called for 'the immediate withdrawal of Allied forces from Russia'. And it took 'action'. After the election the Labour Party and the TUC sent a letter to the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, calling for withdrawal 'at the earliest possible moment'. Then they sent some more letters, happily whiling away the time into the middle of 1919 while the Soviets fought for their very lives.

Other forces sought more than correspondence. The Birmingham Trades Council called for a conference to consider action to force withdrawal. In March the Miners Federation unanimously called for action and sent an emergency resolution to the Labour Party executive and the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC. These august bodies agreed to demand withdrawal but rejected any implied call for industrial action.

The call for industrial action grew, promoted by the BSP, SLP and WSF. In January 1919 their agitation had helped to produce a 500 strong delegate meeting representing 350 organisations to found the Hands Off Russia movement. The conference called for a general strike. Pressure mounted on the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC to call a national conference to decide action.

The Committee decided to seek a meeting with the Prime Minister. After the meeting, which achieved nothing, they decided not to call the conference. As John MacLean had pointed out in January '... the Government has the majority of the trade union leaders in the hollow of its hand and can easily manipulate them against us...'

In May 1919 a proposal had been made for a joint 24 hour general strike in Italy, France and Britain against intervention. The British left groups enthusiastically endorsed it and agitated for support. British Labour representatives succeeded in amending the proposal to a call for demonstrations 'in the form best adapted to their circumstances'. While Italian and French

workers downed tools on Monday 21 July 1919, British workers went on marches on Sunday 20 July.

Italian workers boycotted war supplies and the French Black Sea fleet mutinied. 'In Britain alone has Labour support confined itself to ineffective verbal protests, which the Government has treated with the contempt they deserve' (*The Call* 12 June 1919). With reason did the left dub the Labour and trade union leaders 'lackeys of the master class.' Despite the best efforts of the left and progressive democrats and Liberals in the Hands Off Russia campaign, there was no decisive action by the British working class throughout the long and bloody war of intervention.

THE JOLLY GEORGE INCIDENT

It was the heroism and superior military organisation of the Red Army, forged in the heat of battle and led by Trotsky, that defeated the Allied armies and their White Russian allies. After this defeat, the task of attacking the Soviet Republic fell into the willing hands of Polish dictator Marshal Pilsudski. On 25 April 1920 he launched an invasion of Soviet Russia, with the covert support and encouragement of the Allies, particularly Britain. As *The Herald* put it on 30 April 1920: 'The marionettes are in Warsaw, but the strings are being pulled from London and Paris.'

The New Statesman revealed, on 8 May, that the Polish army was 'very well equipped - largely with British aeroplanes, guns and munitions'. Munitions were being loaded onto British ships by British workers. On 1 May, while Mayday was being celebrated, the *Neptune* quietly slipped out of the East India Dock, London, laden with war supplies. However, this time there was some action.

On 6 May the *Daily Herald* revealed that the *Neptune* had been carrying munitions, that another ship had only been stopped because two firemen had refused to work at Gravesend and deckhands had subsequently refused to continue to work. This was the first recorded instance of British workers taking action in defence of Soviet Russia.

The Herald also revealed that the *Jolly George*, in East India Dock, was being loaded with crates marked 'OHMS Munitions for Poland'. Immediately left leaders

such as Harry Pollitt, a founding member of the soon to be formed British Communist Party, began agitating among the dockers.

The dockers refused to continue loading the ship and declared that the ship would not sail unless the munitions already loaded were taken off. On 13 May the owners, Walford Line Ltd, capitulated and agreed to the removal of the munitions. This was the second and last recorded incident of industrial action against the Allied conspiracy to destroy revolutionary Russia. Harry Pollitt had, himself, earlier failed to stop work on converting two Belgian barges for carrying munitions. At the Dockers' Union conference held the same month, Ernest Bevin, moving a resolution of support for the dockers' action, said that this did not imply any view as to 'the merits or demerits of the theory of government of Russia'.

The Hands Off Russia movement seized on the *Jolly George* episode to renew the agitation for a general strike. At the Labour Party Conference of June 1920, however, a resolution to this effect, moved by a BSP representative, was heavily defeated.

In August 1920 the situation in the Russian/Polish war changed dramatically. The Polish army had had a series of successes but in August the Red Army stopped the Polish advance and began a counter-attack. This immediately raised the spectre of direct Allied intervention in 'defence of self-determination' for Poland.

Councils of Action were formed to meet the threat. The strength of the movement came not from sympathy with Soviet Russia as much as a widespread war-weariness and a fear of extended conscription. The newly-formed British Communist Party (August 1920) threw itself into the Councils of Action. However, some of the Councils rejected affiliation from the Communist Party and other socialist groups.

On 9 August 1920, in response to nationwide pressure, the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Labour Party executive and the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC set up a 15 member National Council of Action empowered to 'use the movement's whole industrial power' to prevent war with Russia. An estimated three or four hundred local Councils were established and where the revolutionaries had influence they quickly took on a radical character. Some 60 Councils added the demand for withdrawal from Ireland to the demand for peace with Russia. Communist Party affiliation to the National Council was refused. The National Council failed to call for a strike and instead organised demonstrations on Sunday 22 August.

Once the threat of direct military intervention by Britain in the Russian/Polish war faded, the steam went out of the Councils of Action. On 7 October 1920 the *Communist* (newspaper of the British Communist Party) declared: 'Frankly the National Council of Action has failed.' Apart from the *Jolly George* in the previous May, there had been no effective action.

The events of 1918 to 1920 demonstrated that the small forces of the revolutionary left were too small to break the grip of opportunism over the British working class. The same forces that had rallied wholeheartedly to the cause of Soviet Russia had stood with the Irish people in their fight for self-determination. Sylvia Pankhurst, John MacLean, William Paul and others had fought hard and bravely against the leaders of the Labour Party and TUC. They never hid their support for Lenin and for Sinn Féin. They faced raids, arrests, imprisonment in the best traditions of the British working class.

Despite the high level of industrial militancy in 1918 to 1920, the British working class was politically defeated, on Russia and Ireland, by the opportunist leaders. This political defeat paved the way for the failure of the 1926 General Strike. The hold of opportunism over the organised working class, strengthened by imperialism, remains unbroken. From Ramsay MacDonald to Neil Kinnock, from Will Thorne to Norman Willis, the Labour and trade union leadership has ever been anti-Soviet, pro-imperialist and, as Lenin said, better defenders of the bourgeoisie than the bourgeoisie itself.

On the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the October Revolution Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), delivered a major speech, extracts of which we reprint below.

The speech was made in the context of Gorbachev's drive to restructure and reform – 'perestroika' and 'glasnost' – the Soviet Union's economy and political life. The CPSU is leading a critical self-examination of the 1917 Revolution and post-revolutionary history as a means of understanding the tasks of today.

In his speech Gorbachev considers some of the controversial periods of Soviet history – Stalin's programme of industrialisation and rural collectivisation, the Soviet-German Pact, and the problems of socialist democracy. He also discusses 'perestroika' and 'glasnost' and problems confronting the Soviet leadership in pushing its programme through.

In a future issue of FRFI we will give a detailed analysis of this speech and of 'perestroika' and 'glasnost'. The speech has been published in full in *Soviet Weekly* 7 November 1987.

On the October Revolution

The year 1917 showed that the choice between socialism and capitalism is the main social alternative of our epoch, that in the 20th Century there can be no progress without advance to socialism, a higher form of social organisation.

Industrialisation

The period after Lenin, that is the '20s and '30s, occupied a special place in the history of the Soviet state.

Under the leadership of the party, of its central committee, a heavy industry, including engineering, a defence industry and a chemical industry abreast of the times, were built in short order practically from scratch, and the general electrification plan was completed.

By the end of the '30s the Soviet Union had moved to first place in Europe and second place in the world for industrial output, becoming a truly great industrial power. This was a labour exploit of epoch-making significance, an exploit of liberated labour, an exploit of the Bolshevik Party.

In those conditions, with the threat of imperialist aggression visibly building up, the party was increasingly convinced that it was essential not just to cover but, literally, to race across the distance from the sledgehammer and wooden plough to an advanced industry in the shortest possible time, for without this the cause of the Revolution would be inevitably destroyed.

At the same time, the period under review also saw some losses. They were in a definite sense connected with the successes I have

8 October 1987 marked the 20th anniversary of the death of Che Guevara, an outstanding communist revolutionary of our age. A brilliant guerilla leader and tactician, Che fought at the side of Fidel Castro and his guerilla army to liberate Cuba from the grip of US imperialism in 1960. He was only 39 when he died.

The British 'left' exploited the anniversary to slander the life, the achievements and the memory of this communist who gave his life to the oppressed in the cause of socialism and internationalism. With arrogant contempt for history and for evidence, *Socialist Worker* claimed that Che Guevara had a 'mistrust for socialists and revolutionaries in the towns and cities' and 'helped to divert the political energies of thousands away from any strategy based on the working class.' The next step claimed that Che 'had no interest in marxist theory' and that for him the 'working class had no role to play in the Latin American revolution'.

As extracts from Fidel Castro's speech on 8 October 1987 celebrating Che's legacy show, his enduring ideas and his role in the fight against imperialism and the construction of socialism have a very special relevance for communists today. It takes a leader of a revolution and a revolutionary people, the Cuban people, to appreciate a real revolutionary like Che.



Gorbachev speaks on history and the future



Flagrant violations of the principles of collectivisation occurred everywhere.

Not were excesses avoided in the struggle against the kulaks. The basically correct policy of fighting the kulaks was often interpreted so broadly that it encompassed a considerable part of the middle peasantry too. Such is the reality of history.

But, comrades, if we assess the significance of collectivisation as a whole in consolidating socialism in the countryside, it was in the final analysis a transformation of fundamental importance.

Democracy

To understand the situation of those years it must be borne in mind that the administrative-command system, which had begun to take shape in the process of industrialisation and which had received a fresh impetus during collectivisation, had told on the whole socio-political life of the country. Once established in the economy, it has spread to its super-structure, restricting the development of the democratic potential of socialism and holding back the progress of socialist democracy.

Stalin

There is now much discussion about the role of Stalin in our history. His was an extremely contradictory personality. To remain faithful to historical truth we have to see both Stalin's incontestable contribution to the struggle for socialism, to the defence of its gains and the gross political errors and abuses committed by him and by those around him, for which our people paid a heavy price and which had grave conse-

quences for the life of our society.

It is sometimes said that Stalin did not know of many instances of lawlessness. Documents at our disposal show that this is not so.

The guilt of Stalin and his immediate entourage before the party and the people for the wholesale repressive measures and acts of lawlessness is enormous and unforgivable. This is a lesson for all generations.

The Soviet-German Pact

It is said that the decision taken by the Soviet Union in concluding a non-aggression pact with Germany was not the best one. This may be so, if one is guided not by harsh reality, but by abstract conjectures torn out of their time frame.

The USSR made great efforts to build up a system of collective security and to avert a global slaughter.

But the Soviet initiatives met no response from the Western political leaders and politicians, who were coolly scheming how best to involve socialism in the flames of war and bring about its head-on collision with fascism.

As I said, the Western ruling circles, in any attempt to blot out their own sins, are trying to convince people that the Nazi attack on Poland, and thereby the start of the Second World War, was triggered by the Soviet-German non-aggression pact of August 23, 1939.

As if there had been no Munich Agreement with Hitler signed by Britain and France back in 1938, with the active connivance of the USA, no Anschluss of Austria, no crucifixion of the Spanish Republic, no Nazi oc-

cupation of Czechoslovakia and Klaipeda, and no conclusion of non-aggression pacts with Germany by London and Paris in 1938.

Perestroika

Two key problems of the development of society determine the fate of perestroika. These are the democratisation of all social life and a radical economic reform.

The democratisation of society is at the core of perestroika, and on its progress depends the success of perestroika itself and – one can say without exaggeration – the future of socialism in general. This is the surest guarantee of changes, both political and economic, and rules out any movement backward.

The changes taking place in the country today probably constitute the biggest step in developing socialist democracy since the October Revolution.

In reorganising our economic and political system, it is our duty to create, first of all, a dependable and flexible mechanism for the genuine involvement of all the people in deciding state and social matters.

Secondly, people must be taught in practice to live in the conditions of deepening democracy, to extend and consolidate human rights, to nurture a contemporary political culture of the masses, in other words, to teach and to learn democracy.

But it would be a mistake to take no notice of a certain increase in the resistance of the conservative forces that see perestroika simply as a threat to their selfish interests and objectives. This resistance can be felt not only at management level but also in work collectives.

Fidel Castro honours Che Guevara

Those who disposed of his body so that he would not become a symbol; those who, under the guidance of the methods of their imperial masters, didn't want any trace to remain, have discovered that although there is no body, nevertheless a frightening opponent of imperialism, a symbol, a force, a presence which can never be destroyed, does exist. When they hid Che's body they showed their weakness and their cowardliness, because they also showed their fear of the example and the symbol. They didn't want the exploited peasants, the workers, the students, the intellectuals, the democrats, the progressives or the patriots of this hemisphere to have a place to go to pay tribute to Che. And in the world today, in which there is no specific place to go to pay tribute to Che's remains, tribute is paid to him everywhere. (Applause)

... when I spoke that October 18 and I asked how we wanted our fighters, our revolutionaries, our Party members, our children to be, and I said that we wanted them to be like Che, because Che is the personification, is the image of that new man, is the image of that human being if we want to talk about a communist society. (Applause) If our real objective is to build, no longer socialism but the higher stages of socialism, if humanity is not going to renounce the lofty and extraordinary idea of living in a communist society one day...

... Che would have been appalled if he'd been told that money was becoming man's main concern, man's fundamental motivation. He who warned us so much against that would have been appalled. Work shifts were being shortened and millions of hours of overtime reported; the mentality of our workers was being corrupted and men were increasingly being motivated by the pesos on their minds. Che would have been appalled for he knew that communism could never be attained by trekking along those worn capitalist paths and that to follow along those paths would mean eventually to forget all ideas of solidarity and even internationalism. To follow those paths would imply never developing a new man and a new society...

... Were he to have seen a group of enterprises teeming with capitalist hucksters – as we call them – playing at capitalism, beginning to think and act like capitalists, forgetting about the country, the people and high standards (because high standards just didn't matter, all they cared about was the money being earned thanks to the low norms) he would have been appalled. And were he to have seen that one day they would not just make manual work subject to norms – which has a certain logic to it like cutting cane and doing many other manual and physical activities – but even intellectual work, even radio and television work, and that here even a surgeon's work was likely to be subject to

norms – putting just anybody under the knife in order to double or triple his income – I can truthfully say that Che would have been appalled, because none of those paths will ever lead us to communism. On the contrary, those paths lead to all the bad habits and the alienation of capitalism. Those paths I repeat – and Che knew it very well – would never lead us to building real socialism, as a first and transitional stage to communism.

But don't think that Che was naive, an idealist, or someone out of touch with reality. Che understood and took reality into consideration. But Che believed in man and if we don't believe in man, if we think that man is an incorrigible little animal, capable of advancing only if you feed him grass or tempt him with a carrot or whip him with a stick, anybody who believes this, anybody convinced of this will never be a revolutionary; anybody who believes this, anybody convinced of this will never be a socialist; anybody who believes this, anybody convinced of this will never be a Communist. (Applause)

... what I ask for modestly at this 20th anniversary is that Che's economic thought be made known; (Applause) that it be known here, in Latin America, in the world; in the developed capitalist world; in the Third World and in the socialist world. Let it be known there too!

VMDC prepares for new battle



On Saturday 17 October, 80 people attended the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign (VMDC) General Meeting in Viraj's sanctuary in the Church of the Ascension in Manchester. The meeting discussed a plan of action to prepare the VMDC for its next major battle with the Home Office - Viraj's appeal against the rejection of his judicial review.

EDDIE ABRAHAMS, SARAH RICCA

Overshadowing the day's proceedings was the bloody Indian war against the Tamil people. In recognition of the common interest between the Tamil people and Viraj's fight against deportation the General Meeting carried a resolution condemning 'the massive military assault on the Tamil people and supporting 'the heroic Tamil resistance, and the struggle for self-determination of the people of Tamil Eelam.'

In an opening report Chris Procter, Chair of the VMDC said:

'In December 1986 the Home Office determined to deport Viraj yet 10 months later Viraj is still here: their deportation order... has been defied. Their intention to attack the sanctuary has so far been thwarted... At the same time the VMDC has developed from a local anti-deportation campaign into a force of national and international significance. However we have not yet achieved our objective: that Viraj can walk free from his imprisonment here.'

The General Meeting recognised that VMDC's successes are based on building support from the bottom - from the local working class community, by work on the streets and the estates, by work with local democratic and progressive campaigns. Discussion therefore centred on the need to expand relations with and support in the local working class community. It is this support the Home Office fears most. To harness and extend such support, the meeting decided on a plan of campaigning to take the VMDC into its twelfth month in sanctuary.

18/19 December 1987 - One Year in Sanctuary! One Year of Resistance!

To mark one year in Sanctuary, the VMDC is organising a WEEKEND of MASS ACTION AGAINST THE HOME OFFICE on 18 and 19 December. It plans to bring local community support onto the streets. The weekend will be a demand on the courts and the Home Office to heed the words of a campaign supporter 'You may be the judges, but we the people are the jury!'

Extend support in the community

A special sub-committee was set up to develop work in the local community. Already public meetings, door to door leafletting, petitioning and street meetings have been organised. VMDC activists will be supporting local tenants associations fighting to prevent Manchester City Council demolishing or selling off local council housing. They will also be supporting the struggle against Council cuts in services to working class areas.

Independent Public Inquiry on the situation in Sri Lanka

Recent developments have exposed Home Office lies that Sri Lanka is a democracy. The Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Agreement used by the Home Office to justify deporting Viraj has been drowned in the blood of the Tamil people resisting Indian and Sri Lankan genocide. The VMDC is organising an independent Public Inquiry to force the Home Office to recognise the truth and grant Viraj the right to remain in Britain.

The VMDC is appealing to all its supporters to join its campaign now and ensure that Viraj does not have to spend another year as a prisoner of the Home Office. With your support the VMDC and Viraj will win sooner rather than later and a major victory will be scored against the racist and reactionary Thatcher government.

Socialist Worker attacks VMDC

The Editorial Board of the Socialist Workers Party newspaper - *Socialist Worker* (SW) - seems unable to resist making gratuitous attacks on the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign (VMDC).

In concluding an article on Salema Begum's sanctuary campaign (SW 31 October 1987) they write:

'Taking the campaign into the Bangladeshi community, workplaces, trade unions and Labour Party is the best way to strengthen Salema's campaign and help combat the relative isolation currently facing Viraj Mendis, who is in sanctuary just three miles down the road.'

It's an odd conclusion that fails first to mention that the 'relatively isolated' VMDC played a critical and decisive role in initiating Salema's campaign (which has since won). It is even odder that this alleged 'relative isolation' should be contrasted to, placed in opposition to building support in the community, trade unions, workplaces and the Labour Party. *Socialist Worker's* Editorial Board must be aware of the fact that in September, the Labour Party Conference unanimously passed a resolution in support of Viraj Mendis. It must be aware that the VMDC has won support from hundreds of trade union branches and of course from the local working class community. In addition it should be noted that Viraj has received support from revolutionary militants in the

Philippines, Ireland, South Africa, Nicaragua and elsewhere.

So what 'relative isolation' are our editors talking about? Maybe 'isolation' from their own conception that the only way to build anti-deportation campaigns is to start from the official labour movement. The VMDC has proved that this is not the case. It has emerged as the strongest - and most inspiring - campaign precisely because it began its work among the local working class and anti-racist community which was not tied down and hamstrung by the bureaucratic and dead methods of the racist British labour movement. Maybe SW's editors cannot stomach the fact that the VMDC has been built successfully in opposition to the false and hopeless conceptions they possess.

Socialist Worker's Editorial Board should follow the lead of the local Manchester SWP branch who give regular support to the VMDC by coming on their Friday marches. Instead of attacking the VMDC, *Socialist Worker* should carry regular reports on the campaign and encourage its readers to join and work with it.

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

VMDC FUND DRIVE

The VMDC has launched a £10,000 Fund Drive to develop its work and finance its struggle for victory. The 17 October General Meeting agreed a target of £5,000 by the anniversary of the Sanctuary.

The campaign urgently needs your financial assistance. So far £1,296 has been raised. In the next 7 weeks the VMDC has to raise another £3,704.

Follow the lead of the VMDC's Midland Bank! Replying to a letter from the VMDC treasurer explaining the nature of the VMDC, the bank manager stated that 'in view of the circumstances surrounding this account' it will not charge for the account. He also refunded the last set of charges of £72.57p! Other contributors include Sinn Féin £10, Taunton CLP £10, SWP £25, Chester Anti-Apartheid £10, Manchester Women's Aid £10 and many other individuals and organisations.

MAKE YOUR DONATION NOW!

I/we enclose £..... for the VMDC £10,000 Fund Drive

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

Return to VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL.

VMDC PICKETS MORNING STAR AND GUARDIAN

In response to the attacks made on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the British press the VMDC organised pickets of the *Morning Star* (26 October) and the *Guardian* (28 October). At the *Morning Star* RCG member Trevor Rayne contrasted the unqualified support for the Tigers from the FMLN and the PLO to the *Morning Star's* reactionary position. The VMDC's open letter to the *Morning Star*, handed in at the picket, has not been printed - the *Morning Star* has hopefully been shamed into silence.

The *Guardian* did not escape the attention of the VMDC - a vigorous picket showed that the VMDC would not tolerate any reporting which encourages intensified attacks against the Tamil people and

strengthens the British Home Office in its racist attacks on Tamil refugees and asylum-seekers as well as supporters of the Tamil cause such as Viraj Mendis.

300 JOIN FRIDAY VMDC DEMONSTRATION

In the biggest of the VMDC weekly Friday demonstrations so far, 300 people marched through the streets of Manchester on 23 October. The Justice for Steven Shaw Campaign made a special mobilisation for the event. Following the 1985 Manchester University student demonstration against Leon Brittan, Steven Shaw was brutalised and tortured by Manchester police. Fearing for his life he has been forced to leave the country. Despite police objections, the VMDC routed the march past Bootle Street police station where the conspiracy against Steven was organised. Besides VMDC, Steven Shaw Campaign and RCG contingents, the march included the local SWP, the WRP, WAR, St Martins College Lancaster, and the VMDC's gay and lesbian supporters.

YOUTH SUPPORT FOR VMDC

Looking back on the 11 months in sanctuary one of the most encouraging things is the involvement of young people. Students from virtually every school in the area have visited me and taken up the issue of deportation.

One class of 11 year olds came to see me recently and all but one supported the campaign although his mother was in favour. After half an hour of discussion with everybody taking part he changed his mind. The clarity in the thinking of the young working class people is a breath of fresh air after the relatively tortuous logic of the adults.

Three fifth formers entering a competition chose my case as their subject. If they win they are entitled to visit Margaret Thatcher. In which case they said they will 'sock it to her'. Our sanctuary has become the focus of various paintings including a beautiful painting of Che Guevara by a sixth form student. Children of my friends ask things like 'why can't uncle Viraj come to our house anymore?' Children at a young age are learning the horrors of the racist immigration laws.

Viraj Mendis

CONFERENCE ON SANCTUARY

SATURDAY 12 DECEMBER

10AM TO 5PM

Church of the Ascension

Speakers include

Viraj Mendis, Father John Methuen, Paul

Weller and Ken Leach (Runnymede Trust)

Entrance £3.00 (£1.50 unwaged)

VMDC BENEFIT

MONDAY 22 NOVEMBER 8PM

West Indian Centre,
Westwood Street, Moss Side

JOIN THE VMDC IN THESE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES!

If you want more information about the VMDC:

Fill in the slip below and return to VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL. Tel: 061-234 3168

ONE YEAR IN SANCTUARY

VMDC PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR ONE YEAR OF RESISTANCE

NATIONAL TORCHLIGHT DEMONSTRATION: BUILD THE RESISTANCE!

Viraj Mendis Will Stay! Deportation No Way!

FRIDAY 18 DECEMBER

Assemble 5pm Piccadilly Gardens

MARCH to the Sanctuary at the Church of the Ascension followed by RALLY

with speakers, music and food at the Sanctuary

All welcome! Bring your banners - bring your friends

VMDC TAKES TO THE STREETS - 12 HOURS MASS RALLY

Viraj Mendis Will Stay! Deportations No Way!

SATURDAY 19 DECEMBER

8am City Centre to 8pm with torchlight march to the

Sanctuary speakers, songs, street theatre, kids shows and fund raising followed by Christmas Social at the Sanctuary 8pm onwards

SANCTUARY

Sanctuary: The Beginning of a Movement by Paul Weller 24pp Runnymede Trust £1.75

Sanctuary is a practical response which ordinary people with a basic sense of justice and compassion can make to the obscenity of the legal system which is currently oppressing individuals, tearing families apart and sending refugees back to loss of liberty or even death.

This pamphlet examines the history, the strengths and weaknesses of sanctuary as a method of resisting deportation. Amongst the sanctuaries mentioned is the VMDC of which Paul has been a longstanding and firm supporter. He writes that its existence as a

defence campaign for a long period prior to Vira's entry into sanctuary laid the material basis for the campaign's construction of a nationally organised focus of resistance and opposition to Vira's deportation and to racism and immigration laws.

With this pamphlet, Paul Weller and the Runnymede Trust have made a valuable contribution to the fightback against racism and immigration laws.

Chas Millington

Chinese workers fight racism

Assaulted by five white customers, arrested and held in police cells overnight without access to either solicitors or interpreters, denied medical attention—and then sentenced to two years' imprisonment for a first-time offence—that was what happened to four Chinese waiters at the Diamond restaurant. The sentence was later reduced to nine months, but the incident has left London's Chinatown community angry at the racist actions of the police and court.

VIRMAN MAN

For years workers in Chinese restaurants have been subjected to racist abuse and attacks. The police have not only refused to put a stop to this but have had an active role in the victimisation of the Chinese community. Why else would the police take witness statements from only the white customers? Why else was it that none of the customers were held for interrogation? Why else was it that none of the white customers were charged for the same offences?

The police's own report of the incident highlights their racism. The waiters were asked: "witnesses said they saw you hitting an Englishman. Is that right?" "Tell us who some of the Chinese were"

The report distinguishes between Europeans and Chinese. The police described the white customers as respectable people.

The Diamond Four Defence Campaign is now monitoring similar incidents—an alarming number of cases are coming to light. The support for the Diamond Four was shown when £9000 was collected in just two weeks, simply by setting up a stall in Chinatown. Said Jabez Lam of the Defence Campaign, "we've accepted all the rubbish that's been thrown at us for too long." "We are not afraid of taking on the racists."

For information contact Diamond Four Defence Campaign, c/o Chinese Information and Advice Centre 152-156 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. Phone 01 379 5098.

Racists mobilise

The racist campaign by the Dewsbury parents who are refusing to send their children to the predominantly Asian Headfield Middle School continues to provide a rallying point for reactionary and right wing forces. The fascist British National Party had their initial plans for a pro-parent demon-

stration foiled by a Home Office ban. They are now distributing leaflets in the town centre and plan to hold their Remembrance Day march in Dewsbury instead of York.

Elements of the racist labour movement have openly rallied to the racist cause. The National Union of Textileworkers' Soc-

ial Club and Institute in Dewsbury has unanimously agreed to support and raise funds for the parents. It has also banned the Dewsbury Labour Party from holding meetings on its premises because it opposes the parents.

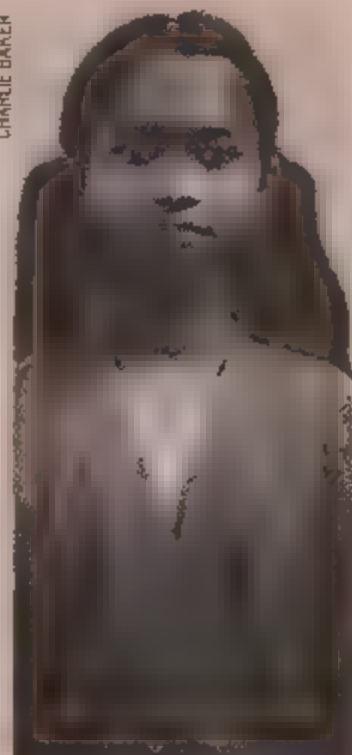
The parents are now applying for a judicial review in the High Court. They certainly know where to look for racist allies. Gordon

Victory for Chorlton sanctuary

Following Renoukaben Lakhami's Leicester sanctuary, another important victory was scored in Manchester. After only 12 days in Chorlton Central Church, 13 year old Salema Begum was able to walk free of the fear of arrest.

Salema came to Oldham, Manchester in October 1986 to join her family after the death of her grandmother. Her parents applied on her behalf for permanent residence but were repeatedly refused by the Home Office. The Home Office first claimed that Gura Miah was lying and that Salema was not really his daughter. It then decided that she had not followed the correct entry procedure and must first return to Bangladesh before they would consider her case. On 7 October the Home Office issued a removal order on Salema. She went into hiding, forced to leave school and her family until 18 October when Chorlton Central Church offered her sanctuary.

As soon as this new sanctuary was announced immigration officials rushed to the Church anxious to end it. No doubt they feared the development of a wider sanctuary movement in Manchester—the VMDC sanctuary in the Church of the Ascension is only 3 miles away. They tried to lure Salema out of the Church with



Salema Begum

false promises. But family and the campaign decided to remain until definite assurances were given that she would not be arrested.

By 29 October, support for Salema developed to such an extent that the Home Office was forced to make a complete U-turn. Salema was granted a temporary admission order until 7 January 1988 with an additional assurance that she would not be detained whilst the order is in force. In addition Timothy Renton, Minister of Deportations, agreed to reconsider the case sympathetically. The Home Office has backed down on its initial insistence that Salema's case would only be considered after she has left the country. However the family is still obliged to undergo a humiliating blood test and is expected to pay for it £500 themselves. The campaign will keep up the pressure until Salema's total victory.

VMDC activists played a central role in establishing and assisting Salema's sanctuary. Without the 11 month VMDC sanctuary and all the inspiration and strength it has given to the anti-deportation movement, Salema would not now be back at home with her family.

On a short visit to London in October, Cde Thami Mazwa, News Editor of the *Sowetan*—South Africa's largest 'black' daily newspaper, talked to Caro Brickley and David Reed about the current situation in the townships, the end of the miners strike and the attack on trade unions, and the prospects for the future.

South Africa 'still boiling'

Can you tell us about the situation in the black townships especially at Soweto, at the moment?

I would say that the situation is still boiling. A compounding factor is that the leadership in Soweto is either on the run or has been detained. Once you have a body flailing without a head you have a situation either of confusion, or lack of direction and a certain element of recklessness. The Emergency Regulations have not achieved what the government wanted to achieve. A lame community instead there is this restlessness and at times desperation from the people in the township. It is also manifesting itself in the unions, in any structure that exists, you find this desperation, anger.

The unions have come to the fore in the struggle in the recent period. Is that related to the fact that the people's organisations have suffered tremendous repression?

Yes, definitely. There is no doubt that COSATU is going to engage itself in community-related issues, and so is NACTU. The trade union movement has been forced to get into community issues. My union (Media Workers Association of South Africa) has always been part and parcel of the people's struggle. Even while we have been trying to concentrate on creating union structures, the problems that our members face have made it quite clear to us that we have got to treat the political aspect as a matter of priority.

Look at the Rand Boycott. It has been going on for a year and my union decided to get a lawyer to be ready to defend our people when any one of them is faced with eviction. That's what most federations have done. The Rand crisis is not the only issue. There's the education and schools crisis. All the unions are involved because it is our children's futures. With organisations like the NDCC and UDF literally emasculated and unable to function properly because of constant harassment from the police there is no alternative but that the unions have got to take on these issues.

How do you view the recent miners strike and its end?

I think I support Cyril Ramaphosa in calling off the strike. The choice that faced Cyril Ramaphosa was: does the NUM continue as a trade union or does it get smashed? That's the choice which faced him ultimately. I'm a trade unionist myself and you do get to a situation where the forces arrayed against you are so formidable that it would be foolhardy to continue. I've got my sympathies with him. Some people might say let's go for broke, but you don't go for broke recklessly. You wait for the exact moment to strike and then you go for broke. Here it would have been suicidal.

Let's look at the methods employed by the mine houses. Firstly you have a migrant labour system where people stay in hostels and they are dependent on the mining houses for food. So the mining houses were denying them food. Secondly, the security system. The mining houses have hired all the people who have left the police because they wanted a better salary and some of them they

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Figures given as 15 October

Mudimu Mairwa, disappeared on Friday 2nd October

Zwelonke Sisulu Editor of *New Nation* in detention 289 days

Mvelisa Jackson Fuzile, *Veritas News Agency*, in detention 479 days

Phila Ngqumbe, *Veritas News Agency* 467 days

Brian Sokutu, *East Cape* (freelance), 470 days

Vincent Mfudisi, *SABC TV* 15 days

are not bound by whatever little code of conduct guides the police, they are a law unto themselves. The way they were dealing with people it was clear they don't have a Police Commissioner to report to—they don't have to hide their excesses. They can just do anything they want. Lastly the Chamber of Mines was not going to budge an inch. It was going to make sure that it crushed the union.

And then there was the unemployment—they could employ thousands who were just waiting to take up jobs. The Chamber of Mines would have succeeded in crushing the NUM. It is very difficult to unarm people particularly after a strike of this nature. The new people would not be prepared to join the NUM. You have got to look at all these reasons and then understand that Cyril Ramaphosa took the wisest decision under the circumstances.

In effect, he also showed the power of the union.

Of course. In Azania to be able to get so many thousands of people to go out on strike, that demonstrates how strong that union is. It's not easy to get people out on strike in any country, but the NUM managed to get people to do it in South Africa despite Emergency Regulations, despite unemployment, despite the various methods that the Mining houses were using against them.

We've heard news in this country about detained trade unionists and about Moses Mabhoko and the show trial which he and his comrades are facing. Can you comment on that, and also the regime's repression directed at trade unions?

I personally support the campaign on Moses Mabhoko. I understand that the campaign is not only about Mabhoko, but he is representative of many other unionists in the country. Mabhoko, because he is in NUMSA and in the Alexandra Action Committee is demonstrating the link between the trade union movement and the community organisations. So there is a lot to say about Moses Mabhoko. I support that campaign particularly as there is evidently going to be a stepped up campaign by the government to deal with the union movement. We had the confiscation of the passport of COSATU General Secretary Jay Naidoo and the President of the Transport and Allied Workers Union, Rankhola. The managements themselves have

adopted a hardening attitude towards the trade union movement.

In the past some managements have realised that there is some justification for some of the strikes. Right now the tendency is 'Crush first and then address the grievances. In the past managements used to try and crush the strike whilst addressing the problems. Now it is: First use the Jackboot and when you have humiliated the union then you can talk to the workers and appear as the good employer who is concerned with the workers and you don't want the union to come in and mess around with the relationships. You have this two pronged attack from management—the houses and the government, so I am left in no doubt that the heat is on the union movement.

Three of our officials were detained just last week. Two have been confirmed. The third was just abducted in the street and we don't know where he is. There is obviously increased activity on the union movement. Look at the way the state dealt with the railways strike and the postal strike. With the railway strike the brutality! They did not hesitate to shoot people at point blank range. They did not hesitate. SABS, the employer, is not honouring the agreements made with the union at the end of the strike. The postal strike too, again the day after the settlement the officials of the union were detained. At one stage the leadership couldn't be at home, they had to go into hiding. It was obvious they were going to be kidnapped and killed. The country is getting like South America, all opponents of the government are going to disappear or their bullet-ridden bodies will be found in the veldt.

We hear a great deal in the British press about the release of black leaders like Mandela and the possibility of a negotiated settlement. Is there any possibility of a negotiated settlement?

The possibility is there of the release of certain leaders, yes. The government would want to be seen by the international community as a very humane government. They have decided the criteria will be age, health and the number of years a prisoner has been in jail. So here you have the government trying to portray itself as humane and prepared to forgive its political foes.

The same government talks of negotiation. At this point, I am sorry to say, if there are any negotiations and agreements are reached you are going to get Nkomati-style agreements. There are still prerequisites that have to be met. The PAC and ANC have got to form a united front. Right now the government is seen to be having the upper hand. Until the liberation organisations can demonstrate that they have the upper hand it will be impossible to go to the negotiating table without coming out with an Nkomati-type agreement. Also the liberation movements have got to agree to the type of climate within the country that will force the white people in South Africa to press their government to go to the negotiating table. I am in the country, I have seen any pressure coming from white people calling on the government to negotiate with the organisations of the people. Negotiations are out of the question at this stage.

RESPECT NOT PITY

Speech made by non-stop picketer Susan (aged 12) on the special picket for youth in South Africa on 30 October

I want to speak today about the wonderful struggle of the children in South Africa. Recently we heard from Glyn Kinnock about the vile torture of the black South African children by the South African police.

This torture fills us with disgust and hatred of the South African police but also with deep respect because it is these young children and youth who are making certain that the struggle for their freedom will go on.

Glyn Kinnock and the Labour Party is only sorry for them. We are proud of them. And we hope in some small way that we the picketers are acting with them.

I can tell you that young people cannot stand rubbish and I cannot stand Glyn Kinnock's pity for them. I say that Glyn Kinnock should come down to the Embassy and take a few rifle risks herself to protest against apartheid.

Children in South Africa and children in Britain have very different lives. But we all know when enough is enough.

CALL TO LIFT

SUSPENSIONS

A letter has been written by British Members of Parliament addressed to the African National Congress in Lusaka, requesting the reinstatement of David and Norma Kitson who were suspended from the activities of the London ANC in November 1984.

David Kitson was released from prison in 1984. Five months after his arrival in Britain the suspensions took place. Funding for the 'job for life' at Ruskin College, Oxford, promised him by his trade union, TASS, when he was a prisoner, has been withdrawn. His suspension from the ANC is given as the excuse. David has been working at Ruskin College since he returned to Britain. The College fully supports him and wants him to continue. They have now conferred on him an emeritus post.

SUSPENSIONS - OCTOBER

On 26 October all charges against six picketers were dropped arising from 13 June 1986, the day after the imposition of the State of Emergency in South Africa. On that day the police launched a particularly vicious attack on the picket directed at black people and stewards. Eight people were arrested, four of them were badly assaulted in the process, and then variously charged with assault on police, highway obstruction, police obstruction and threatening behaviour. The real crime is that the charges have been allowed to stand for more than a year.

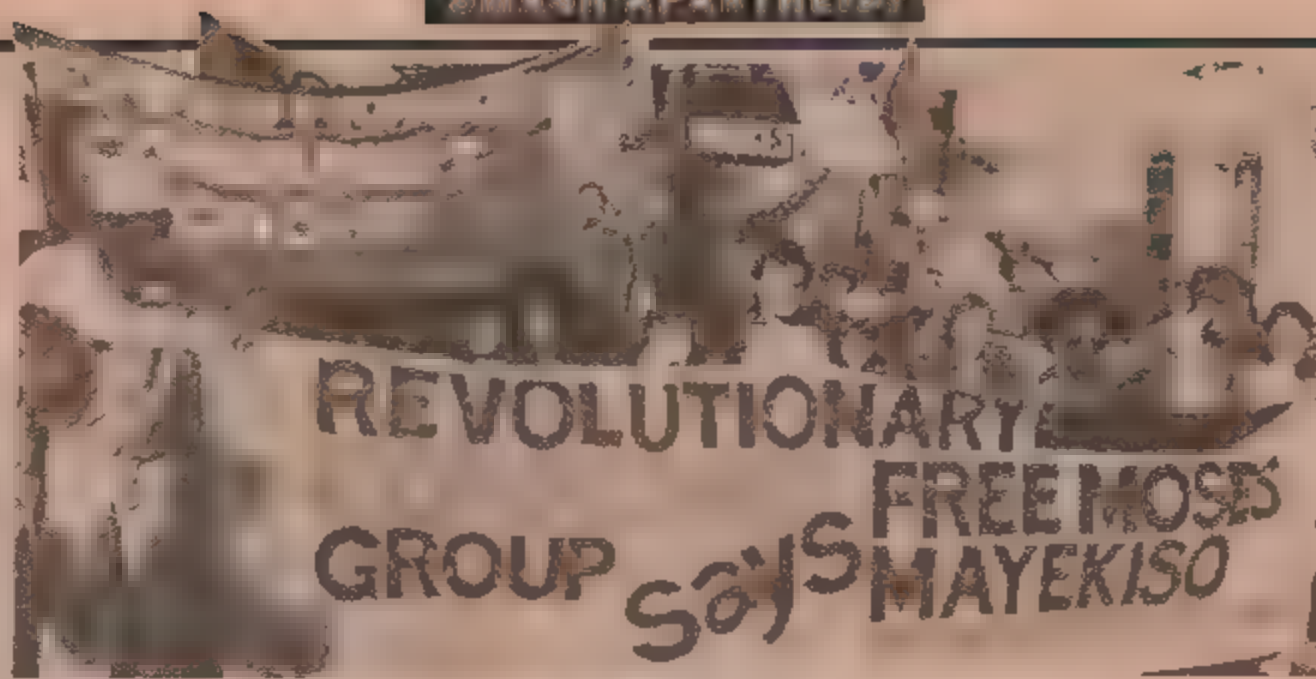
Lorna and Virman were acquitted of highway obstruction when police attacked the picket, smashed the table and then accused Lorna and Virman of breaking it. Mike and Simone had ludicrous charges against them dropped. They supposedly committed the crime of drinking a cup of coffee and stepping off the pavement. André won his appeal against a conviction for hitting a police officer with a baton.

GRAPEVINE...

A new boom at the CPS (which independently after discussion with the police decides on whether to pursue charges) has decided that the number of charges outstanding against Non-stop picketers is ridiculous. We agree.

G. Herbertson, late of Cannon Row and I SE, has been promoted to Superintendent in charge of TSGs at Paddington Green. It is rumoured that this is suitable just for a Chief Inspector who in the past a year has been involved in pounds of taxpayers money and even more in police hours pursuing a vendetta against the picket, banning it from the pavement, driving motorists at Cannon Row to an all-time low and making the police force a laughing-stock. This is a record even for Cannon Row.

Late is known about the whereabouts of CI Perry. G. Herbertson's partner in crime Ramour has it that he is studying for his 11-0 is.



Moses Mayekiso must go free

Scores of metal workers with Daniel Dube, the President of their union NUMSA, Congress of South African Trade unions leaders Jay Naidoo and Elijah Barayi and an observer from the British TUC were amongst the 200 people crowded into room 4E at the Rand Supreme Court on Monday 19 October. Many wore T-shirts 'Free Moses Mayekiso'.

It was the opening day in the trial of NUMSA's General Secretary and his four comrades from the executive of the Alexandra Action Committee. Relatives greeted and hugged the accused. Moses Mayekiso entered the dock, smiled and gave a clenched fist salute alongside his young brother Mzwanele, Paul Tshabazala, Richard Mjakane and Obed Bapela who all pleaded not guilty to charges of treason, sedition and subversion. The state alleges that the Alex 5 masterminded the creation of the yard, street and area committees, the peoples courts and the activities of the young comrades in making Alexandra ungovernable (see FRFI 71 and 72).

On the second day police pointed out on maps and aerial photographs of Alex the

locations of the peoples courts and the homes of the accused. Judge Van der Walt cleared the public from the courtroom what a contrast to the people's own courts. The press were allowed to stay, on condition that they did not identify prosecution witnesses. 15 businessmen and traders testified that they had suffered from a 3-month consumer boycott. One claimed his turnover dropped from R20,000 a month to R30 a week. None of the traders had met Moses Mayekiso.

Under cross examination by David Soggett SC, advocate for the accused, a shopkeeper admitted that he had once shot at a group of youths. He offered another possible reason for the boycott of his business, that police often used the premises. Children

ANDY HIGGINSBOTTOM

would gather in front of his home shouting 'Sell Out!'. Another witness agreed that there were high rates of unemployment and poverty, no electricity or sewerage and that by 1985 there was a real threat of forced removal for the people of Alex. He agreed that in the period of the peoples courts the crime rate, murders and stabbings had dropped significantly during the anti-crime campaign by the youth.

The Alex 5 share their cell with eight comrades aged from 17 to 28 years old from the Alexandra Youth Congress (AYCO) and comrades from Kagiso township. Nineteen in one cell. The treason trial of the AYCO 8: Mxolisa Zwane, Vusi Ngwenya, Andrew Mafurho, David Mafurho, Arthur Vukazi, Albert Sibola, Piet Magano and the 17 year old has been underway in courtroom 4F, next door to the Alex 5.

The Alex 5 trial will proceed for months, much of it in camera. There is no

jury. Judge Van der Walt ruled from the outset that although treason is a capital offence the death penalty would not apply in this case. Even with racism South Africa the campaign of protests inside and outside the country has begun to have an effect. Van der Walt is no liberal. His decision allowed him to dispense with the assessors which would otherwise sit with him (in place of a jury by apartheid laws) and avoid the possibility of a split decision. He served his paymasters well in a previous trial, sentencing ANC freedom fighter Marion Sparg to 25 years in prison for treason.

The regime wants to put Moses Mayekiso behind bars for a very long time because he organised a new generation of resistance. There is a tough battle ahead to make sure that the Alex 5 and all those who participated in the street committees and peoples courts go free. Join with us in the campaign to release Moses and all the detainees right now.

Moses Mayekiso must go free!

On 6 November City Limits magazine presented the Non-stop picket with its award for best demo 1987. Cdes Zolile Keke and David Kitson presented the award to Grace and Danny on behalf of the picket. Viva City Group!

March for Sanctions



On 24 October some 50,000 people took part in the AAM's only national demonstration this year. The organisers claimed 75,000 but even this figure would make it the smallest AAM national march for years.

Those who did follow the trail through London to the rally in Hyde Park were treated to the usual collection of AAM speakers. Joan Lester, Labour Party creatively rewrote history by accusing Thatcher of delaying independence in Zimbabwe. In fact, of course, the 1964-70 and 1974-79 Labour governments had deliberately twisted and turned to avoid Zimbabwean independence at the cost of thousands of lives.

The theme of Thatcher's intransigence was taken up by ANC speaker Johnston Makatini. He warned that Thatcher's refusal to take action against the apartheid regime might lead to the radicalisation of the ANC and even attacks on the British interests.

RCG comrades and City Group supporters formed one of the liveliest contingents on the demonstration. There were many people who could be mobbed into an effective anti-apartheid movement as shown by the 520 FRFI solo. However they will have to join with City Group if they want something better than the AAM's meaningless ritual, and increasingly rare marches.

Terry D Halloran

March for Mayekiso

'We fully appreciate support from comrades outside to release all the detainees and to free Moses Mayekiso'

Message from the National Union of Metalworkers South Africa to the March for Mayekiso demonstration on 10 October.

Despite heavy pouring rain nearly 1,000 people marched to join the Non-Stop Picket of the South African Embassy. They were in the right place at the right time, and in sufficient numbers to make their voice of solidarity heard by the front line fighters in South Africa. A week previously the New Nation newspaper had reported City AA's 14 September picket for Mayekiso, and days before the trial opened the Weekly Mail carried a front page photograph and report of the 10 October demonstration, together with a double page advertisement from the Friends of Moses Mayekiso. The mass circulation daily The Sowetan also reported that hundreds took to the streets of London.

The Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, comrade Gora Ebrahim, former political prisoner David Kitson, Freddie Kauko of SWANU, Jeremy Corbyn MP, City AA's Convenor Carol Brickley, David Reed of the RCG and all groups who participated in the day gave speeches. Comrade Ebrahim called for the release of Nelson Mandela, Zephania Mothopeng, Moses Mayekiso and also his detained brother Ismail Ebrahim.

An executive member of COSATU and several former political prisoners marched too. Messages of support for Mayekiso came from Arthur Scargill, four Members of Parliament and from prisoners inside Britain's jails.

The democratic, non-sectarian ap-

proach argued for by the RCG and adopted by City AA through conveying the March for Mayekiso Committee open to all who supported 10 October was fully vindicated. The demonstration was led off by the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group and the Glasgow Young Republican Flute Band who had travelled 800 miles to take part. A diversity of contingents from political, cultural, trade union, student and youth groups included the RCG and supporters of Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! The banner of Viray Mendas, our comrade excluded from taking part by the racist Home Office, took pride of place.

Those in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, SACTU and the leadership of NALGO and other trade unions who have boasted their support for Moses Mayekiso, yet

tried to sabotage any practical campaigning activity, were nowhere to be seen. On the initiative of FRFI supporters the Islington NALGO branch, and other NALGO members defied the disgraceful sectarian manoeuvres to stop them marching. There was a band of SWP members at the beginning rally, even proud to say that they had come only to sell Socialist Worker. They had no intention of marching in the rain and soon left when they realised they could not justify their party's refusal to unite in action for Mayekiso and his comrades.

David Reed, Editor of FRFI summed up the message of 10 October.

'City of London AA is offering a new way forward. This march for Moses Mayekiso and his comrades is a break from the rotten traditions of the left. It is a stand on the side of democracy. It is a stand for open and non-sectarian campaigning. It is the beginning of a new fighting movement against apartheid. Indeed, it is everything Moses Mayekiso and his comrades stand for.'

City AA's campaign for Mayekiso is now focussed on the Non-Stop Picket where there was another mass rally to mark the opening of the trial on 19 October. It was joined by a contingent of firefighters from 180 branches across London. Every month of the trial City AA will hold a mass rally to keep up pressure on the racist regime. Everyone, without any exceptions or exclusions is welcome.

Andy Higginbottom

THATCHER TERRORISES VANCOUVER SUMMIT

At the Vancouver Commonwealth summit in October Thatcher once again blessed apartheid. Alone, she stood against sanctions and argued for even greater investment and collaboration with the apartheid regime. With racist arrogance and total disregard for the real terrorism of apartheid, she dismissed the ANC as 'a terrorist organisation' to which she would never talk, denying that both Geoffrey Howe and Lynda Chalker had met with Oliver Tambo as representatives of the Conservative cabinet. Thatcher was again exposed as the greatest ally of apartheid.

APARTHEID TERRORISM IN MOZAMBIQUE AND ANGOLA

South Africa's aggression against the frontline states has taken on a bloody character again. On Thursday 29 October South African backed MNR massacred at least 211 people and destroyed 80 vehicles in an ambush on a large convoy on the country's main north-south road in the area of Paninga, 50 miles from Maputo. This was the second ambush in the area to take place within a fortnight and the fifth in three months. 53 people were killed by the MNR in an ambush of a convoy on 16 October, 92 people were killed in Manjacaze on 10 August and 424 were killed in the town of Momoine on 18 July. Relimo condemns the actions of the MNR as an attempt to isolate the capital city of Maputo. Prelimo said on Monday 2 November that the MNR's tactics were 'conceived and planned by the racist South African regime' and South Africa 'has in recent months proceeded with massive infiltration of bandits into southern Mozambique with the specific task of practising this extreme, horrific and inhumane form of terrorism - the indiscriminate slaughter of men, women and children.'

South African terrorists struck again on Saturday 31 October. South African forces stormed a SWAPO base in Southern Angola, killing 150 SWAPO soldiers. 2 South African soldiers were also killed.

PRISONER MARRIES

Wilton Mkwayi, an ANC member jailed for life on Robben Island since 1964, has finally won government permission to marry Irene who he married by proxy 20 years ago. They were married on 31 October.

Lorna Reid

PAC ARMY ON THE MOVE

Enock Zulu, a leading member of the Azanian Peoples Liberation Army (APLA), the military wing of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, stands trial in Pretoria along with six others in what amounts to an admission by the state that the PAC is a powerful and effective force in South Africa today.

The 1980s have been declared the decade of the Azanian revolution by the PAC and 1987 particularly the year that the masses would be armed. Zulu and three of his comrades are alleged to have undergone military training and to have been active within South Africa. Scorpion machine pistols, weapons used exclusively by the PAC, were found on the bodies of Neo Sarel Khoza and Tshapo Libet who were killed in a car chase in September. The regime has offered a R1000 reward to anyone giving information leading to the arrest of persons in possession of scorpion pistols.

The trial of Comrade Zulu, along with others in the Transkei accused of harbouring PAC freedom fighters, proves that the PAC is true to its word and is indeed arming the masses in 1987.

Dave Kenny

What is the programme of the Pan Africanist Congress for Azania?

The PAC regards itself as the custodian of the 1949 Programme of Action which was adopted at the Bloemfontein Conference of the African National Congress (ANC). If you look at the history of our struggle, the ANC was formed in 1912. From 1912 until 1949 it was an organisation which merely reacted to the series of laws that the South African regime was passing, but did not itself have a programme. The 1949 programme, which was presented by the youth, and in fact it was presented by the first President of the PAC, Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe, for the first time raised fundamental questions. First, what is the nature of the struggle in apartheid South Africa? The nature of the struggle, it said, was that the people of that country had yet to exercise their right of self-determination, and therefore the struggle was for national liberation and self-determination as opposed to a civil rights struggle in our country.

We do not regard apartheid merely as a struggle against racial discrimination, we regard apartheid as a history of dispossession, oppression, exploitation and discrimination.

So what is your attitude to the white people of South Africa?

We do not look at the situation as such that there are Black people, Coloureds, Indians. We start off from the premise that in our country we have human beings. There are people in our country who have introduced the element of racism in our country. Those people must rid themselves of racism. To us anybody who owes his allegiance to Africa and accepts African majority rule is an African. That decision has to be taken by them, we cannot impose it on them. What you would call the white people in our country, we say to them what is it that you are protecting? Certainly you are not protecting your pigmentation, for no one can change that. What they are really protecting is their privileges... We are fighting a system, which, unfortunately, in our country is perpetrated by a group of people who claim they are preserving a racial group, but what they are really protecting is material interests which they have allocated to themselves and used the question of racism to justify that position. What we are saying to the white people, as you say, is it is they who must make the choice of either remaining the oppressors in our country, in which case we will fight them, or joining the oppressed people.

If white people accept your programme can they join your movement?

Yes, the constitution is very clear. They have joined in the past, but we do not regard ourselves as a circus where we parade ourselves on the basis that so and so is white, so and so is coloured etc. For instance if you look at me, perhaps you would say I am a person of Asian origin. But I am an Azanian. In the PAC, I am not representing my group or my racial classification. I am an Azanian who accepts African majority rule and I owe my allegiance to the African continent. I am a member of the PAC. Similarly anyone else can join.

The programme that is widely known in Britain in relation to the South African struggle is the Freedom Charter. Most people have heard of it. What is the attitude of the PAC to the Charter?

It is not a question of an attitude. What you have to ask is what historical factors led to the drawing up of the Freedom Charter, what were the political motives? You say that the Freedom Charter is widely known in Britain. It is equally true that people tend to take the view that because the Freedom Charter says that South Africa belongs to all those who live in it black and white, therefore anyone subscribing to the Freedom Charter is automatically non-racial and anyone opposing the Charter therefore becomes a racist.

The Freedom Charter came about as a direct challenge to the 1949 Programme of Action because that Programme raised the fundamental question of the right of self-

Fighting for Azanian liberation

FRFI is proud to publish an interview with Cde Gora Ebrahim of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC). As part of our solidarity with all organisations fighting apartheid and for liberation in South Africa, we have in the past printed interviews and articles by ANC representatives and others from the liberation struggle. We are now pleased to print this interview with Cde Ebrahim, conducted by David Reed, as part of that solidarity. Cde Gora Ebrahim is a member of the Central Committee of the PAC and the Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Information. He is currently based at PAC external headquarters in Tanzania.



PAC Cdes Gora Ebrahim (second from right) and Rodwell Mzotane (far left) lead the march for Moses Mayekiso on 10 October

While he was in Britain, Cde Ebrahim raised the question of the kidnapping of his brother Ismail from Swaziland to South Africa. Cde Ismail, formerly a prisoner on Robben Island for 16 years, has been tortured in detention and is now threatened with trial for High Treason. Cde Gora Ebrahim gave FRFI the details.

The South African racist regime, by this and similar acts, have continued to violate the territorial integrity of independent states in the region. These kidnappings have been done in a violent way. In the process of kidnapping my brother and other people from Swaziland, a son of a Swazi national was murdered and one of the kidnapped people was killed along the way. They kidnapped my brother, tied him up with wires and took him across the border. They now claim that they do not know who kidnapped him; he just appeared in Pretoria and they arrested him. They have been carrying out a number of kidnappings in the region.

He has smuggled out a letter to me. In it he describes how they have subjected him to severe mental torture to the point of breaking him. He has survived that. We have taken the matter several times to court and because of the pressure we were building up they have removed him from Section 29 (detention incommunicado) and are now charging him with High Treason.

We want to say to the British authorities, they are very quick to denounce and condemn violence. But here the

regime has violated international law but the British government has done nothing to protest. I have specifically asked them are they now waiting for the national liberation movements to start kidnapping so that they can then claim to take an even hand and condemn both sides? If that is what they are waiting for they should tell us. We believe they should condemn these actions.

The judge said to my brother that they know that he has smuggled out a letter to me and the fact that there is little international outcry means no-one believes what he writes. It is important that the judge is proved wrong. Actions in Britain help tremendously. Even if they do not secure the release of prisoners it helps the prisoners to know that the world is aware of what is happening and that the world is condemning the regime. You have a great responsibility in Britain because the British government is arguing that they must maintain links with South Africa to bring pressure for peaceful change. We believe that if that is what they claim seriously to be doing then the least they can do is the condemn this sort of terrorism.

determination. If you say that South Africa belongs to all those who live in it, black and white, then I have to ask what is the contradiction in the country? If the issue of self-determination is resolved, what is left is the problem of lack of democracy. You reduce the whole issue from one of self-determination and national liberation to one of civil rights. The Freedom Charter says the rights of racial groups will be protected. What is apartheid doing at the moment? It is sponsoring the rights of racial groups. We say that that kind of group mentality is a perpetuation of the apartheid system in another guise.

There is also the question of 'land to the tillers'. You have to seriously look at the economic situation in our country. The PAC maintains that there are two aspects of the land question. The land as a country - it was colonised and this colonial power as a result of law passed in a foreign parliament, the British parliament, handed over the country to a settler minority. That is a fundamental question which has to be resolved. Then we must talk about land as a means of production, who will own those means of production? We have contemplated the fact that there has to be state farms, co-operatives and, in the beginning, also private ownership of land and small individual farmers. You cannot take the big agro-industrial complexes in our country like sugar, maize, wheat, vineyards and say 'land to the tiller'. We have to seriously look at these questions rather than make a bland statement. In our view the people who drew up the Freedom Charter did it specifically to try and reduce our struggle to one of civil rights, as opposed to solving the national question first and foremost.

Tonight you attended a meeting of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group. Have you any comments?

It has been a unique meeting for me given that the traditional anti-apartheid organisations in this country who always claim that they are fighting for a democratic non-racial South Africa, have been most undemocratic in their approach to our struggle. They have refused the inalienable right of our people to determine our own future. It is they who believe they can decide for us. That is a form of neo-colonialism. City of London Anti-Apartheid Group has acted in a way that has initiated the process of liberation of the support groups in this country. The fact that they have taken this non-sectarian position has led to the liberation of the supporters of our struggle in this country.

Look at the contribution of the PAC to the last 27 years. It was the PAC that led the 21 March campaign which culminated in the Sharpeville massacre. To us that campaign was very important because it led to three important consequences. First the mental liberation of our people to understand that this is a vicious fascist regime. Second, our people lost the fear of going to prison - the enemy could no longer threaten our people. Thirdly the Sharpeville campaign changed our struggle from protesting to challenging the regime, and it led to the armed struggle. That was a very significant campaign. The traditional, I would prefer the term 'establishment', anti-apartheid organisation here observes the 21 March but wants to rewrite in cheap ink what our people have written in blood. Today it distorts who organised it and what the aim of that struggle was. We believe it is your responsibility to correct this history in Britain. If you take the Soweto uprising of 1976 the only people who were formally charged were PAC and Black Consciousness Movement members. 18 PAC members appeared in court at the only political trial which was held in total secret. Today there are six comrades who face the death sentence as a result of the current uprising - The Sharpeville Six.

We have passed the phase where our people are mentally liberated, they no longer fear going to prison, and they have lost the fear of the enemies guns. It is as a result of this that we have declared the 1980s as the Decade of the Azanian Revolution.

Left in Disarray

There was little possibility that the two thousand delegates who attended the Socialist Conference in Chesterfield on 24 and 25 October would achieve a great deal. The British left is in disarray, thoroughly on the defensive, lacking a cohesive political strategy and, on most occasions, unable even to debate the vital issues with each other let alone act in unity around a common cause



telling us he did not want 'electoral power' but 'political power to smash the capitalist system'. There is an enormous leap to be made here. And one that the British Labour Party with, of course, a 'strong movement outside Parliament' (Benn) is somehow expected to accomplish. How is it to be done? A little bit of faith comrades.

DAVID REED

The answer had, in fact, already been given. Now safely installed in the Houses of Parliament, our man for all seasons supplied the answer. Ken Livingstone gave us his apocalyptic vision. The tide had now turned to the left with the Wall Street crash. The 'worst recession that has happened since the Second World War' is upon us. 'It will change all political relationships... the whole

SOCIALIST REVUE

Entertaining 2,000 delegates on a Saturday night at a conference as disparate and vociferous as the Chesterfield gathering would be a hard job for even a seasoned entrepreneur. The 'Solidarity Rally' was bound to encompass both the best (and it was very good) and the worst (way beyond expectations) of the British Labour movement.

'Best' were the North Staffs Women Against Pit Closures choir - a group of working class women who have drawn the political lessons of the miners' strike and set them to music. And these lessons are not restricted to the strike itself, but include the recognition of common struggle with the Irish, South African and other oppressed peoples. Listening to them, we could see how political consciousness is changed through struggle.

'Worst' was the evening's compe and amateur comedian, Mike Elliot MEP, whose chauvinism was breathtaking. His comment following the performance by the BTR Sarmcol strikers of the gumboot dance that 'it things get much worse in Thatcher's Britain we'll all be doing Wellie dances' has only been surpassed by the radical yuppies of the RCP. Their report on Chesterfield in *Ins*, devoted mainly to personal abuse of the participants, describes the Sarmcol strikers as a 'South African troupe' and their dance as the 'township equivalent of Morris dancing'. The Sarmcol strikers have been locked-out for two years and their performances in this country are to raise solidarity and money for their struggle. Being black, or oppressed, or having a 'foreign' culture have always been the triggers for the British chauvinism and racism which often passes for wit. Mike Elliot and the RCP have learnt from the British ruling class to dispense their shit from a great height.

Carol Brickley

agenda for socialism is back in the forefront of society'. Simple isn't it. Forget that the left is in disarray, that 'left' Labour councils are instigating cuts (Livingstone, after all, started the riot) and that Thatcherism faces no seriously organised political opposition. Have faith, the socialist dawn is opening before us. All good stuff for a late Saturday night rally with plenty of beer inside them!

For the rest, the British Trotskyist left was there in force, recreating Stalinism no doubt to reaffirm their own existence. The Socialist Workers Party and other assorted Trotskyists howled down the fraternal delegates from the Soviet Union when they were welcomed on the platform. A New Communist Party delegate was reminded that his organisation was still in existence when other, rather noisy, Trotskyists harangued him on the stairway about Solidarnosc and Poland.

The Socialist Workers Party was there in force, and, led by humourist Paul Foot, kept giving everyone abstract lectures on 'reform and revolution'. The revolution, of course, is to be led by 'the working class at the point of production... by which they mean British trade unionists. Coming from an organisation which would not recognise a revolution even if it saw one, this was a bit of a cheek. The SWP not only refuses to acknowledge the existence of all socialist countries but has attacked all revolutionary struggles for national liberation in oppressed nations. At home its sectarianism prevents it from joining demonstrations in support of South African leader Moses Mayekiso and leads *Socialist Worker* to constantly attack and undermine the vital anti-deportation campaign in defence of our comrade Viraj Mendis. Neither Washington nor Moscow, nor anything else, but the SWP! Not a good foundation to build socialist unity.

The most fruitful session that the RCG delegates attended was a workshop on racism introduced by Sharon Aikin. Precisely because anti-racism is so crucial for any socialist movement the discussion here brought out the sharpest political points. One delegate, Jim Fazel, had earlier torn up his Labour Party card in protest at the treatment of Sharon Aikin, dropped as the parliamentary candidate for Nottingham East after correctly describing the Labour Party as racist. Narendra Makanji, vice-chair of Black Sections, pointed out that black sections had not been recognised in the Labour Party 'because the white leadership of the Labour Party and trade union movement are putting out a signal to the white voters that black people in the Labour Party are expendable'. As with many at this conference, why he remains in the Labour Party is a mystery.

The RCG argued in this workshop, after drawing the connections between the racism and oppression directed at Irish people and that directed at black people, that a new socialist movement in Britain could only be built on an anti-racist, anti-imperialist basis. Further, that given the wide divergence of political views and organisations at the conference, it was more important to find the issues which would allow us to unite in action, in particular in defence of those facing the onslaught of Thatcherism, than to talk past each other about our ideological differences.

The conference decided to organise regional meetings followed by a national conference in May. The RCG will argue for these meetings to be more representative of the forces fighting back and for them to aim at creating unity in action.

ORGANISE WITH FRFI

NON STOP ACTION AGAINST IMPERIALISM

Lorna Reid looks at what the RCG has been doing over the last month and some plans for the future

NO PEACE FOR TAMILS - NO PEACE FOR VIRAJ MENDIS

Alone on the British left the Revolutionary Communist Group has actively raised support for the Tamil people's right to self-determination. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are fighting to defend the Tamil people from the Indian army onslaught. Ranged against them are the Indian Army and the Sri Lankan government backed by British and American imperialism. Like the Irish people and the black people of South Africa their fight for national and democratic rights is being ruthlessly attacked by the imperialists and their agents. And like the Irish people and the fighting masses of South Africa their struggle has received the same response from both the bourgeois and the left press in Britain. (See the article by Trevor Rayne in this issue)

The RCG has been the only communist organisation in Britain to recognise the LTTE as a national liberation movement, the vanguard of the Tamil people. Whilst the left was hurling slanders at the Tigers the RCG gave them a platform in meetings called Sri Lanka - No peace for Tamils. No peace for Viraj Mendis. At our own public meetings, and meetings initiated by us through the VMDC, we gave the Tigers the opportunity to speak to people about their struggle. We did this in the spirit of internationalism to explain why the working class in Britain has to support the Tamil people's right to self-determination. The main international backer of the Sri Lankan government is Britain. Since before formal independence up to the present day the Tamil people have had to fight a police force, built by the British and modelled on the Royal Irish Constabulary, and the British SAS. The victory of their struggle will strengthen the revolutionary forces in South Asia and weaken our enemy at home - British imperialism. In this context we argue that our comrade Viraj's struggle for citizenship in Britain and the Tamil struggle for nationhood are waged against the same enemies - racism and imperialism.

Public meetings by the RCG and VMDC were held in London, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. In London Anton Raja, representing LTTE, shared a platform with Trevor Rayne for the RCG, Virman Man for the VMDC and Jeremy Corbyn MP. Anton Raja and Trevor Rayne shared the platform with Viraj Mendis in Manchester.

We supported VMDC pickets outside Downing Street and the offices of the *Guardian* and the *Morning Star* to protest at support given to the war against the Tamils by the British government, the British bourgeois press and the British left press. In Manchester the RCG has been the main driving force in organising support for the Tamils through the VMDC. On Friday 6 November the VMDC held a successful demonstration to support the Tamil people. We supported a demonstration in London organised by Tamil people from southern India and a packet of the Indian High Commission. We will continue to mobilise support for the Tamil people and expose the role of British collaboration with the Sri Lankan government and its death squads in the Indian army.

MARCH AGAINST APARTHEID

In October the RCG marched twice through London against apartheid. On 10 October we marched with the City Group March for Moses Mayekiso (see report). We marched again on 24 October on the AAM demonstration. We supported the City Group contingent and the torch light rally on the Non-Stop Picket afterwards. Our members and supporters from London and outside sold a total of 520 copies of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* To discuss fully the significance of the South African revolution for the working class we are holding dayschools for all our members and supporters.

Our political work on the streets, in our meetings, through our newspaper is laying the basis for a new movement. On 24 October we took our politics and our practical experience to the Socialist Conference in Chesterfield (see report). It was there that the bankruptcy of the left, inside and outside the Labour Party, was exposed - no aim, no unity, no action.

FREE THE FRAMED PRISONERS

Following the dayschools we are mobilising for our public meetings in December Free the Framed Prisoners to build support for the Birmingham Six and all framed prisoners - the Guildford Four, the prisoners of the uprisings, the Broadwater Three, miners, peace activists. On 22 November we are supporting the Manchester Martyrs demonstration and the VMDC has been invited to speak at the rally. The RCG in London is running a series of forums on Ireland. Our members in Glasgow held a very successful public meeting on Scottish prisons and the recent rooftop actions taken by the prisoners to draw attention to their appalling conditions of confinement.

BUILD A NEW MOVEMENT - JOIN THE RCG

In all our work and activity we are fighting to build a movement against racism and imperialism. We are addressing our politics to the oppressed in Britain, join with the oppressed all over the world to defeat the enemy at home and abroad - British imperialism.

FIGHT RACISM
FIGHT IMPERIALISM

We need £10,000 Now!

We have raised £804.36. Special thanks to Mr A H Knott, James Butler, Michael Rawson, Brian Cummings, Terry O'Helloran, Adam Sherwood and Adam Bowles. £9,195.64 to go. This means we need to raise over £1,500 per month to raise £10,000 by April 1988. Rush your Xmas donation to our fund.

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★ JOIN THE RCG ★

- Take the side of all those struggling against imperialism—Join the RCG!
- A movement must be built in Britain in solidarity with the struggling peoples of Ireland, South Africa, Palestine, Central America. Help us to do this—Join the RCG!
- A movement must be built here in Britain which stands with the oppressed fighting racism, repression and poverty. Help us build this movement—Join the RCG!
- A movement must be built which challenges and defeats the treachery of the opportunist leaders of Britain's Labour and trade union movement—Join the RCG!

I wish to join/receive more information about the RCG

Name _____ Tel _____
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Return to: FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

GLASNOST ON GLASNOST

Dear comrades
I fully agree with Dale Evans' point that the processes of glasnost and perestroika... are of fundamental importance for the renovation and modernisation of socialism, and should be taken seriously by communists and socialists everywhere. ("Gorbachev and Social Reform" *Letters FRFI* October 1987).

Although *FRFI* has covered the USSR and nuclear power/the arms race, I agree with Dale that, given their significance for the revolutionary movement, historical and contemporary events in the Soviet Union/Eastern Europe, have been rather neglected in *FRFI*. In 7 years and 72 issues, it has contained the following: 1 half-page editorial statement on Poland (September-October 1980); 2 pages on 'War and the Soviet Union' (May 1985); 1 page on Hungary 1956 (October 1986) and a 1/2 page reply to a WRP critic (February 1987); 1 review of an RCP book (February 1987); and the 7 part series on the 1917 Revolution (March-October 1987).

That said, Dale is straining credibility in claiming that my article (*USSR: What is glasnost?*)... sides with the old conservative bureaucracies because Gorbachev hasn't done things the Cuban way. He bases this on my brief final paragraph which tentatively suggests that there may be a difference in terms of theoretical approach; and in so doing omits the vital qualification from my suggestion - "... without wishing to set one (sic Cuba) against the other (USSR)".

Having now read Gorbachev's 'Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress' (25 February 1986) I still think that, although Gorbachev correctly describes the nature of imperialism, he does not analyse concretely the problems it poses for the USSR.

Furthermore, I don't think that my article, nor any other article in *FRFI* shows... disapproval of what is taking place in the socialist world. Nor can I see that any *FRFI* article has championed any one socialist country against any other.

The RCG's Manifesto, *The revolutionary road to communism in Britain* (1984 pp 13-17) quite correctly did not 'adopt' a particular socialist country, as sectarian groups have done (Maoists in the 1960s; currently, the NCP's pro-Moscow stance). But the Manifesto is, of necessity, written in rather broad terms: a much more detailed analysis of the history and current position of the socialist countries is required, if the meaning of glasnost is to be understood. Having not yet carried out this analysis, the RCG has been silent

rather than disapproving.

I am currently working on a book on part of this question, entitled *Seven Decades of Soviet Power*. May I appeal to *FRFI* readers to write to me if they have access to any unusual information sources.

Yours fraternally
Patrick Newman

tns - NO COMMENT

Dear FRFI,

"The British media, meanwhile, acted as a press service for the Colombo government, echoing its condemnations of 'Tamil terrorism'... We reject all attempts to blame the suffering and strife in Sri Lanka on 'Tamil terrorism' (tns, newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Party, 1 May 1987).

"The Tigers retaliated with a campaign of terror to drive Sinhalese settlers out of the area. By the end of September they had killed 20 Sinhalese peasants and uprooted 3000. Much of last week's violence was directed against Sinhalese settlers... The Tigers also launches a murderous feud against their opponents within the Tamil community." (tns, 16 October 1987).

Need I say more comrades?

Neil Lewis
London

SUPPORT THE PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Dear FRFI,

I have read in your paper, *Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism*, October 1987, the interview with Irish prisoners relatives Geraldine Bailey and Sheila McDonnell. It was very good indeed. As a one time prisoner's relative, my husband Raymond McLaughlin who is now dead (he died of a heart attack and a half year in jail over England as an Irish POW) I know only too well what these families are going through. When their men were sentenced, they also were sentenced.

The visits are beyond human belief. Relatives first have to travel from Ireland worrying about the visit. You cannot sit beside your loved one in some prisons. It really does tear you apart. I ask people and groups to support these families in the Campaign For Repatriation on a united front.

I have written this letter because I know clearly what these families are going through.
Mary McLaughlin
Buncrana

PS. Many thanks for the *In Memoriam* for Raymond. He has gone but his spirit lives on. I felt that I had to write this letter.

LETTERS

FRFI welcomes letters from readers. Please send them to FRFI BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS - CARE OR REPRESSION?

Dear all,

After being physically forced to a clinic twice every week for four months, and locked in the house with the door guarded for the rest of that time, I was admitted to psychiatric hospital, diagnosed as schizophrenic.

Psychiatric hospital is seen as caring for the suffering. People enter professions within the system saying they want to 'help people'. They are seen as caring people with understanding and goodwill. Good social workers, nurses and occupational therapists might exist, but most of the care in fact comes from other patients. Patients put endless time and energy into each other and receive no payment for it - let alone external recognition. If you have been a patient you will experience stigma, regardless of how many other patients you have helped.

The main form of treatment is Tranquilisers, and maybe Electro-Convulsive Therapy. Nurses are not required to sit down with patients and find out about them. If they do sit and talk to them it is on an informal basis. What they have to do instead is constantly reaffirm with them the standards of the system; there is something wrong with the patient and so the patient must take medication. Their fate is determined by the opinion of the psychiatrist. Psychiatrists are not required to learn about their patients. They are just required to 'diagnose' them by their external behaviour, and then prescribe the corresponding medication - not much help if you need to talk to someone because you have been raped.

Psychiatric hospital is actually a means of social control, though its approach and means is different from that of prisons. Its medium is medication which is administered to almost all patients. When a patient is considered fit for discharge, medication takes the credit. Discharged patients become out-patients and must continue to take it in tablets or a regular injection. They and their relatives are taught that otherwise they will have a 'relapse' and have to be re-admitted. Refusing to believe you are ill, not talking to people (sulking) and showing anger against the system are symptoms of schizophrenia. Medication makes you apathetic and lazy, all your thoughts

are suppressed so hearing voices in your head is the only way your thoughts can make themselves present - in a garbled and nonsensical way. Hearing voices is a symptom of schizophrenia and the 'care' is more medication to drown the voices and make you almost asleep all the time. Being locked away by your relatives so that they can hide from the family problems is very common, and is the background of a large proportion of 'schizophrenics'.

People in hospital for depression are allowed to experience mocking and sarcasm from the less sensitive nurses. Their problems are seldom recognised. Their depression is seen as a medical condition. Apart from medication a common treatment for them is Electro-Convulsive Therapy. This is disastrous psychologically, as it causes temporary loss of memory. This means you will identify even more deeply with the psychiatric institution. If you have Electro-Convulsive Therapy, you are likely to find it very difficult to break out of your patient role.

It is virtually impossible to change one's medical records, and the psychiatrist's reason for your treatment is always valid against yours. Moreover, doctors seldom disagree with each other, and most refuse even to question each other. This is a pure power structure. (It is not exactly making anyone 'better').

On top of this, you have the defensive attitude of those working in the system who want to preserve its status quo. People claim to represent patients to affect progressiveness. Any independent voice of the patients is quenched by those riding their backs, and any genuine wish of a member of staff, to achieve equality with patients, is isolated by the system, and made futile. Psychiatric institutions function to contain dissatisfaction with society, or evidence of its destructiveness.

North London

OATH-TAKING

Dear FRFI,

The recent decision by the Sinn Féin and Flaitis to take the oath proposed by Tom King for the Six Counties' local councillors, must cause concern.

The decision can only weaken efforts to mount a campaign now against the imposition of any such special oath. It is, after all, a question of basic democratic rights - the right of the people to elect who they will as

local councillors. When the intended target of the oath agrees in advance to take it then it is much more difficult to fight against the oath itself.

Sinn Féin leaders have described the oath as a form of words but that form of words may yet become a means for legal harassment of Sinn Féin councillors.

In August 1927 de Valera led Fianna Fáil into the Dail and signed the oath of allegiance to the British King. He called it an empty formula.

Terry O'Halloran
North London RCG

TELEVISION VIOLENCE

Dear FRFI

The coverage of the Hungerford killings in *FRFI* 71 was both confused and irrelevant. It is not enough to simply list a few events in which numbers of people died, and then say, 'well, what do you expect from a sick society?'. There is surely a major difference between, say, the mass-suicide at Jonestown - brought about by Rev Jones' inability to resolve the contradictions between Christianity and revolutionary Communism - and the apparently militaristic fantasies of Michael Ryan. To equate the two does not facilitate understanding of either, nor does it offer any direction forward.

Perhaps even more disappointing, however, was the total failure to comment on the issue of television 'violence'. It seems to me that the opportunity offered by the media's cross and censorious opening of this 'debate' should be seized by the Left, to extend discussion into the very real threat that certain depictions of violence pose to progressive movements here and elsewhere in the Capitalist world.

Recent research in America has demonstrated that the relentless and ubiquitous portrayal of crime in television fiction has the effect of exaggerating in the minds of viewers the real level of violent crime in society. A belief that 'decent citizens' are now living in a virtual state of siege is fostered by fiction, and reinforced by selective and emotive news reporting. And television drama is quite clear about the answer to this distorted but seemingly catastrophic tidal wave of crime - give more powers to the police, strengthen the secret services, develop a new breed of ruthless, tough, armed protectors of the State, capable of taking on the criminals and the terrorists at their own game.

In the context of this message, pumped out night after night, the wildly inappropriate response of sending in the riot squads to deal with a few minor thefts at Notting Hill Carnival becomes quite acceptable in the minds of the public. Television does not merely reflect the changing

face of the police; it acts as a propaganda machine to excuse the escalation of State violence and to create conditions favourable to the development of further repression.

Violence on television is significant. Not to respond to the current debate to miss a perfect opportunity of examining and explaining the crucial relationship between the State and the media. It is also to allow the censorship lobby to silence the dissenting voices of artists hostile to the State. *Black Christmas* (the 'night horror' referred to by Carol Brickley) was the first splatter movie to be scheduled on British television; its banning bodes ill for other, more progressive works in the genre. The Left, to its shame, failed to take seriously the suppression of so-called video nasties: don't make the same mistake again.
Peace, force and joy
Alwyn W Turner
Humanist Party

We suspect that our Humanist friend was more concerned at missing *Black Christmas* than with the observation we made on the Hungerford Massacre (*FRFI* 71). Our paper has consistently opposed state censorship on all issues from the struggle in Ireland, the fightback of black people, the miner strike and press coverage of the intelligence outfits; in fact wherever the interests of the working class are at stake.

We would like to see more violence on television: that is, an honest coverage of how the British Army and police make a living. However, only 'confused' libertarians would fight censorship on the grounds of the right of the Mafia and multinationals to exploit a free-market in video nasties. Who does it serve when the humiliation of women becomes a ritual celebration, when torture and murder are presented as enthralling spectacles? You tell us, what is a progressive 'splatter movie'?

What happened at Jonestown, Guyana in 1978 when 914 people were killed had nothing to do with the 'Rev Jones' inability to resolve the contradictions between Christianity and revolutionary Communism; they were murdered by the CIA after a control project got out of hand. Guyanese police found the bodies riddled with bullets; their report was suppressed. Jones liaised with the CIA, and supplied Guyanese ministers with women and drugs. The CIA had the bodies cremated before an autopsy could be carried out. When CIA involvement was revealed in March 1979 the infamous 'suicide tapes' were released and disseminated through the usual channels.

Look inside the brain of Jim Jones of Michael Ryan and you will find the same Master of Ceremonies, conjuring up the forces of fascism in defence of monopoly capital.
Trevor Rayne and Carol Brickley

RCG PUBLIC MEETINGS - FREE THE FRAMED PRISONERS

LONDON

● **TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER 7.30PM**
Caxton House, St. Johns Way, London N19
Admission 50p waged/25p unwaged

● **WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 7.30PM**
Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill London SW2.
Admission 50p waged/25p unwaged
SPEAKERS INVITED: Maire O'Shea, Birmingham Six Campaign, Mike Mansfield

MANCHESTER

● **TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 7.30PM**
'British Prisons lift the lid - Free the framed prisoners'
Abasindi Centre, Moss Side.
Admission 30p waged/20p unwaged.

SPEAKERS INVITED:
Terry O'Halloran, Mike Russell

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIGHT RACISM!
FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

● Society meets every Wednesday 1pm, Council Chambers, Birmingham University Guild of Students.

● For details of meetings in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee.

Leeds, Liverpool, Bradford, Lancaster, Birmingham, Bangor write to:
FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

JUMBLE SALE
SATURDAY 5 DECEMBER 2PM

Camden Black Parents and Teachers Centre, Kentish Town High Street, London

LONDON SUPPORTERS

● **TALKING POLITICS WITH THE RCG** - meetings recommence January 1988. For details write to FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

A new mini pamphlet has been produced by the Free the Framed Irish Prisoners Campaign giving full details of the Guildford Four, Birmingham Six, the Maguire Family frame ups in the 1970's and the more recent case of Patrick McGlaughlin. It is essential reading for everybody and costs 10p. The campaign is asking individuals and organisations to make bulk orders. Available from Free the Framed Irish Prisoners Campaign, BM Box 1320, London WC1N 3XX

MANCHESTER SUPPORTERS

● Meetings every fortnight on Tuesdays at 7pm, at Church of the Ascension, Hulme. Next meeting 17 November.

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TAMIL PEOPLE'S WAR

The Tamil people and their revolutionary vanguard the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have fought the Sri Lankan army, the ex-SAS of Keeny Meeny Services, Israeli Mossad and Shin Bet agents, Pakistani military advisers, South African mercenaries and now the world's fourth largest army, the Indian Army, and still they are undefeated in their struggle for Tamil Eelam — a homeland.

India's assault, like the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement, has nothing to do with ending violence or installing democracy: perhaps 1,000 or more people were killed by Indian forces in October and another 200,000 made refugees, it has everything to do with preventing the emergence of a revolutionary state in India's own backyard. For the Indian ruling class knows that a liberated Tamil Eelam would not only speed the socialist revolution throughout Sri Lanka but would ignite the Indian revolution as well, putting an end to one of the most bloated and corrupt bourgeoisies in the world, which presides over the misery of 700 million people.

THE DECISION TO ATTACK

With leading Tiger Armisthalingam Thileshan's hunger strike and death on 26 September amid widespread Tamil revolt, the Tamil people signalled that they would not accept any stooge administration foisted upon them nor would they allow Sinhalese domination to continue, this time with Indian patronage. (see FRFI 72)

On 28 September the Indian and Sri Lankan governments appeared to acknowledge the Tigers' power and granted them a majority of places on the proposed Interim Administration for the northern and eastern Tamil areas. This predictably provoked the wrath of the Sinhalese chauvinists. On 3 October, 17 Tiger cadres were captured by Sri Lankan forces off the Jaffna peninsula. They were accused of smuggling arms although they had previously notified the Indian Army of their journey. Despite Tiger leader Prabhakaran's appeal to the Indian government for the men to be released, Sri Lankan President Jayewardene and National Security Minister Athulathumudali demanded the Tigers be brought to Colombo for interrogation. This was in violation of the Agreement. On 5 October as the 17 were being taken to a Sri Lankan Air Force plane they took the cyanide pills. Twelve of them died: two were senior Tiger commanders. The consequences were inevitable. Prabhakaran explained that the violence in the eastern province 'was not masterminded by us. But there was a spontaneous fall-out from the killing of our Trincomalee Commander, Pudendran, and former Batticaloa commander, Kumarpappa'. The Tigers issued a press statement both 'vehemently denying' the massacres and condemning them as 'barbaric acts of violence'. Some 150-200 Sinhalese died, and, as with the bomb attacks on civilians in Colombo in April, the Sri Lankan government spread news around the world that the Tigers were the culprits.

The Indian government took the opportunity swiftly. Sri Lankan army vehicles left their camps and moved in convoy with Indian Army trucks through Tamil areas; one vehicle, carrying the Superintendent of the British-trained Sri Lankan Special Task Force, was blown up. On 9 October the Indian Defence Minister visited Jayewardene and announced an all-out attack upon the Tamil Tigers.

The Indian Army threw a news cordon around their operations. They said it would take three days to complete their exercise. The men and women of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam fulfilled the promise of the title they have chosen.

The first non-Indian government communication on the fighting came on 13 October when a Red Cross official reported constant shelling by Indian troops, the use of 120mm mortars and other heavy guns with indiscriminate effect, and attacks by 'bombers' and helicopter gunships. On the same day Prabhakaran offered a ceasefire and negotiations if the Indian Army called off its assault. Jayewardene had declared Prabhakaran a criminal and put a 1 million rupee price on his head. A Sri Lankan minister explained: 'If Prabhakaran and all eight of his commanders are eliminated, then we shall be OK. Then we can create an administration without them. We can call on the Tull and Plote and Telo and Eprif, and we shall be in business.' The Indian Army maintained its assault on Jaffna, launching joint sorties with Sri Lankan helicopters, seeking Prabhakaran and his commanders, demanding unconditional surrender and acceptance of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement.

Tiger resistance was fierce. From trees they ambushed the Indian troops, fought hand to hand, attacked them from the front, the rear and the sides. By 15 October Indian troops had been halted on the outskirts of Jaffna city and those in Jaffna fort were still under siege. On 16 October the BBC World Service reported that the Roman Catholic Bishop of Jaffna had accused the Indian Army of calling on people to shelter in schools, temples and churches and then systematically bombarding them. Again Prabhakaran appealed, along with the Red Cross, for a ceasefire and negotiations.

The Indian Army commandeered civil airliners to reinforce their numbers; eventually some 25-30,000 Indian troops were pitted against a Tiger force reportedly 'no more than 2,500'. Truly, the Tigers and the Tamil people fought a people's war as

TREVOR RAYNE

truth and justice. Our leader Prabhakaran declared that we would rather live on our feet than die on our knees. If necessary we will fall as martyrs in our people's struggle but we will never go as lambs to the slaughter. With this belief we took a firm decision to resist. *Message from the Political Committee of LTTE to the People of Tamil Eelam, Jaffna 20 October 1987.*

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Many refugees fled to churches and temples to hide from the fighting only to be bombed by the Indian Army.

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shown in a Channel 4 newscast on 27 October: young men and women were defending the streets they lived in. The Indian Army was reduced to crude propaganda and brutal reprisals on the civilian population. Finally, when the Indian Army reached the centre of Jaffna, it was still surrounded by 'pockets of resistance', and Prabhakaran had gone. As General Kalkar of India's Southern Command told Loren Jenkins of *The Washington Post* in Jaffna on 24 October: 'We really don't know how many have been killed... we honestly don't know how many people we are actually facing here'. A Sri Lankan military official added, 'Personally, I think the main groups have slipped away to fight another day'.

The Tiger leadership and cadres will

now be regrouping. They fought underground from 1973-83 before achieving their liberated territories. The Indian Army must neutralise the Tigers if it is to secure its relationship with the Sinhalese ruling class and maintain Jayewardene's regime. This requires it to construct a viable alternative leadership of the Tamil people to that of the Tigers. This in turn will require concessions from the Sinhalese ruling class which may prove to be explosive. If it fails to achieve this, and continues to refuse to negotiate with the Tigers, then its huge forces will founder and sink in the quicksands of a people's war.

*Victory to the Tamil Tigers!
Build solidarity with Tamil Eelam!*

Left wing imperialism

'Revolutionary socialism is my political philosophy. By socialism I mean the construction of an egalitarian society where there is no class contradiction and exploitation of man by man, a free rational society where human freedom and rights are protected and progress enhanced. Che Guevara is the guerrilla leader who inspires me most.' Yellupillai Prabhakaran, Commander of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The FMLN of El Salvador, the PLO, and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines all support the Tamil national liberation struggle. The British and Indian ruling classes understand its revolutionary character, but the British left, almost to an organisation, vilify the Tamil Tigers with the kind of language they usually reserve for the Irish national liberation struggle.

The Guardian's 8 October editorial 'These Tigers are Wild' set the tone. Thus, 'Earlier 13 Tamils suspected of smuggling arms killed themselves in government custody with cyanide capsules like so many Nazis... this entirely voluntary (and thoroughly stupid) act of self-immolation in the cause of spurious martyrdom. People like these are beyond the reach of reason.' But not, presumably, out of the reach of the Indian army.

This paper covered Amnesty International's report listing the Sri Lankan state

among the seven worst torturers in the world. When the European Resistance partisans took their own lives upon the point of capture in order to save the lives of dozens of their comrades would *The Guardian* call them stupid? Would it use their self-sacrifice as 'proof' of their guilt? No, but then the Tigers are Asian, not European, and they are fighting an ally of British imperialism, not a foe!

FOLLOW THE LEADER

The Guardian, with its progressive facade and circulation among Labour Party supporters, is uniquely placed to cause maximum damage to the cause of solidarity with oppressed people's struggles. When the left parrots its prejudices you can understand just how far the racist, colonial mentality has seeped through British

society.

Thus the *Morning Star*, also on 8 October: 'Yesterday's sectarian massacres of Sinhalese civilians in eastern Sri Lanka by the LTTE have shown the organisation up in its true colours.' The *Morning Star* is shown up regurgitating Indian Army press releases. It regards all Tamil resistance to Sinhalese chauvinism as reactionary: 'The Tamil Tigers' leadership has regarded pogroms, hunger strikes and suicides as a means of pressing home its drive for hegemony... they have not abandoned their separatist aims, which threaten Sri Lanka's national integrity as well as the future of the Tamil population.' Never mind the repeated anti-Tamil pogroms, the 10,000 Tamils murdered by British trained troops since 1983, the 300,000 Tamil refugees scattered across the globe since 1980, for the *Morning Star* it is the Tamils' fault for resisting and thereby threatening Sri Lanka's national integrity, and thus British imperialism.

Socialist Worker, as usual, is above it all: 'Tragically, the Tamil Tigers have turned increasingly to the tactics of their oppressors - random communal violence... It has taken the Tigers many years to degenerate into crude terror tactics'. Replace 'Tamil Tigers' with 'IRA' or 'black lumpen proletariat' and the same formula has been used a hundred times by *Socialist Worker*.

True to form the 16 October the next step stepped into line and announced: 'The Tigers retaliated with a campaign of ter-

ror to drive Sinhalese settlers out of the area... The Tigers also launched a murderous feud against their opponents within the Tamil community.'

THE STAND OF THE RCG

The British left has no intention of building solidarity with the Tamil national struggle. It has never understood imperialism, the difference between the nationalism of the oppressed and that of the oppressor. For it, nationalism is the stuff of Mussolini, and Thatcher: reactionary. They cannot see that the lesson of Vietnam, Cuba, etc. is that the right of nations to self-determination, the national democratic revolution, is the first necessary step in the construction of socialism.

Further, the British left is selective about which national liberation movements it supports. The more remote they are from directly challenging British imperialism, the more willing the British left is to support them - if only in words; the more 'tame' the movement, the more they can see in it the resemblance of their own British Labour movement, the more charitable they can be. This is British chauvinism.

The stand of the RCG is to support the struggle of oppressed peoples against imperialism wherever they may be, however they may choose to go about it.

Trevor Rayne